

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Autumn 2021 | Issue 312

THE 2021 CONFERENCE

MEET OUR MEMBERS - DENISE MEAD

MY JOURNEY TO FAITH AND THE GUILD

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



I've lost count of the number of Conferences I have now attended - is it 4, 5 or 6?? What I do know is that this year's felt very different. There was a definite air of, "We're not going to let COVID rob us of our gathering together" and a tangible sense of gratitude for the fellowship and spiritual sustenance that Conference affords to all who attend (notwithstanding the excellent training and opportunities for sharing of priceless skills and experience).

I will admit that I was a little unsure, given my redundancy and relocation, but that sliver of trepidation disappeared as soon as I drove off the motorway and could see the Malvern Hills in the distance. I knew that I would be surrounded by friends old and new and renewed by the ministry of those who arrange, organise and deliver the training modules, services and activities during these few precious days. Coming home, I felt positively rejuvenated, despite what turned out to be a rather tortuous journey. Roll on 2022 and the 90th Anniversary of the Guild - who knows what will be in store by way of celebrations in what I'm hoping will be a joyous year.

Jane Gorrie
CEGV Media Officer

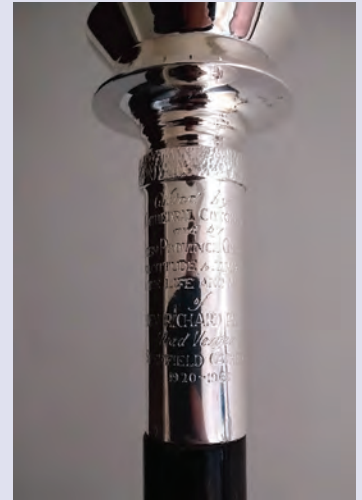
Cover story

This edition's featured verge is the Pentecost Virge or Mace of Sheffield Cathedral.

The inscription tells that it was "gifted by the Cathedral congregation & the Northern Province of the CEGV in gratitude to Almighty God for the life of Stephen Richard Pentecost, Head Verger of Sheffield Cathedral 1920 - 1961".

It was made in 1972 by James Dixon & Sons of Sheffield and the head consists of a four-winged crown surmounted by a cross.

Stephen was one of the founding members of the Guild. The mace is the Dean's mace (used whenever the Dean, or Acting Dean, is in procession). Generally used by the Dean's Verger but can be used by another Verger in his absence.



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.



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FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



I have started writing this letter whilst at the Vergers Conference and Retreat at West Malvern. With Covid regulations in place, facemasks and hand sanitising was very much the order of each day. Despite all the enforced regulations placed on us by the centre, we Vergers took it all in our stride. It was such a joy to see folk in the flesh, smiling and grateful that we could finally all get together for our four days of fellowship, teaching and worship. We have also formally welcomed our new National Chaplain, Mother Rosemary. We soon got into the swing and rhythm of the week. Being here at West Malvern the centre is situated in one of the most wonderful places in the country. The Malvern Hills behind us, Hereford and Wales stretching out as far as the eye can see before us – what a place to be during the summer.

The quality of the talks that were given to us this year maintained the high standard that we have come to expect year on year at Conference. Having a year off has enabled students that have undertaken the Guild's Diploma Course to complete the necessary units either at Foundation Level or the Full Diploma. We were able to have a bumper crop of awards presented at the Guild Congregation.

Two National Life Memberships were conferred, on Philip Dunne and Margaret Burston. The Guild Fellowship was conferred on Stephen Stokes and the hood given to him was that of his late grandfather Dennis Sumner. It was a delight to welcome members of his family to witness this momentous event.

As the week progressed folk started to relax and were at ease with Covid regs and mask wearing. I would like to thank all who helped behind the scenes to enable to make the conference a success. This includes the centre staff, Executive Committee, clergy, speakers and not least, all the delegates who attended and had the faith to travel.

John Kirby-Shearer
Chairman

MY PRESENTATION



I am a member of the St Albans branch and my church is St Mary the Virgin Eaton Bray. I passed with Distinction.

Jill Fountain GV.dip



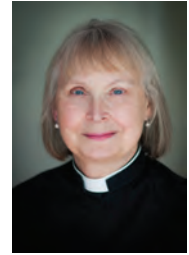
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FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



How to say 'thank you' for the generous hospitality I was given by vergers at the Guild Annual Conference in Malvern? It was both a sad occasion, as Canon Maureen's last conference, but it was also joyous, with senior appointments conferred and awards given, most notably, that of Chaplain Emeritus to Canon Maureen. The conference theme, 'Making a Difference', was all the more poignant as it shone a light on the immense difference that Canon Maureen has made to the Guild and its members over many years and it was a wonderful opportunity to give thanks to her.



Behind the conference was extraordinarily detailed planning by the Guild Chair, John Kirby-Shearer with the Guild Secretary and newly appointed Fellow, Stephen Stokes (congratulations, Stephen!), as well as extra care by everyone following the rules. We were blessed in another way by the presence of Fr John Ackland, in the photo with the Guild Welfare Officer, Irene Money, the Guild Chair and Chaplain Emeritus. Fr John, from the London, Southwark and Chelmsford Branch, is the first Branch Chaplain to have attended a full conference. We can look forward to his reflections on the conference in a later



edition, but I do know that his impressions were favourable and he thought it a golden opportunity to get to know members and understand better the challenges that vergers are facing today.

'This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.' (Psalm 118: 24) These words were in my heart and prayers every day of the conference. They were in the faces of many of the participants! The words that follow: 'O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!', are not only an appeal, but a reminder to give thanks for prayers answered. Yet they are also an encouragement in how we set our face to the wind when it is

blowing against us. Sometimes we need to tell ourselves to be thankful, and then find reasons to be. This year there were vergers attending conference for the last time; others unable to attend due to ill health who would have otherwise been with us. More were committed elsewhere, during a period of especially hard work in Cathedrals and Churches over the summer months. In this Autumn edition of *The Virger*, I send all members, near and far, my love and blessings, confident in the power of the Holy Spirit to uplift us and bind us together in one body through holiness and prayer.

Mthr Rosemary





FROM THE DESK OF THE WELFARE OFFICER



How wonderful to see our Verger friends again after not meeting last year at Malvern. The beautiful fellowship, good food, fresh air and the mountains to walk, (Malvern Hills) our Spiritual needs met and opportunities for honing our verger skills. Sadly, there was to be no swimming this time although we are assured the pool will be up and running next year.

This brings me on to the more serious reason for my writings.

Talking about next year, brings me to wonder whether we are doing the right thing and looking after ourselves when we come to the Conference. As a disabled Verger myself I know what I can do and what I can't, thanks to my NHS surgical appliance boots I can travel and be independent. I can't climb 'the hill' to the 'Vergers Arms' (Brewers Arms) P/H at the top of the hill, but I don't let that put me off, an early night is a great treat for me.

Can you lift a 22 kg suitcase or backpack? Or get on and off a train and arrange your own transfers to and from the Conference venue? Are you independent? Are you allowing your fellow Vergers time to enjoy their time away from their Churches for this much needed rest and relaxation as well as keeping your own safety and wellbeing in mind.

Why am I sharing these words with you? "It might be time to leave the stage" were words from our Chair a few years ago. There is nothing to be gained by putting yourself in danger. Our God is a loving God and wants us to be mindful of taking care of ourselves and allowing others to enjoy their Conference.

Whilst some of us may have hidden disabilities our medication works wonders. If you know you that you have struggled this year, do think about hanging up your boots as you still have much to offer at home. And being a prayerful witness is a special task you can do anywhere.

Be Kind to Yourselves

If you feel uneasy about my article contact me, PLEASE.

Irene Money, National Welfare Officer

PRAYER REQUESTS

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

Prayers for our Vergers during this time of half-open churches, for those who feel alone, are furloughed, redundant or struggling in new, unfamiliar and uncertain times.

Somerset & Avon

Marek Barden, Mary Holway, Roger Lawrence, Trevor Llewellyn

York Branch

George Cook

St Albans Branch

Peter Hudson

East Anglia Branch

Val Pizzey, June Harris

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch

Patricia Platt, Margaret Scott

Oxford Branch

Gerry and Hazel Knight

Durham and Newcastle with Carlisle Branch

Jimmy and Margaret Guy

Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester Branch

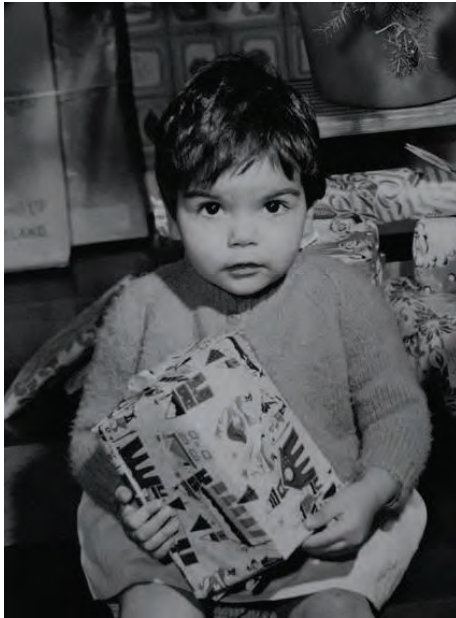
Margaret Burston, Paul and family

And all people facing hardship and difficulties and who are facing uncertainties.

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

MEET OUR MEMBERS - DENISE MEAD

MY JOURNEY TO FAITH AND THE GUILD



I can't really remember a time when I haven't attended church. As a tiny baby I was taken by my dad, to St Mark's CofE Church, South Norwood. My day sang tenor in the church choir, along with my 7 year old brother who was a wonderful treble. My sister who is 13 months older than me was a sickly child and often stayed at home with my mum. Apparently I used to sit quite happily in my pram, being looked after by a family friend called Yvonne.

I attended St Mark's CofE primary school situated right next to the church and later went on to a private school situated right next to the church I now work in. The school belongs to a Christian Foundation so all school services were held in the church or the tiny school chapel.

When I was about 10, mum decided she wanted us to change churches. Dad was tasked with this momentous job. Dad was musical, he sang and played the piano and the organ (after a fashion). He wanted to carry on singing so he visited two or three churches with good musical traditions.

However he was thwarted and his reputation for being a rather 'loud' tenor meant he wasn't offered a place in a church choir. Nevertheless as a family, we settled in what was then Croydon Parish Church (now Croydon Minster).

We had only been in the congregation for a couple of weeks when the choir mistress from the separate girls' choir approached and said: 'I hear your girls (my sister and I) can sing...' The rest, as they say, is history. We both sang regularly until marriage and children forced us to stop. We've sung in cathedrals, churches and toured Holland and Germany.

In the mid 1970's my sister and I became altar servers which was a very radical move! Tut, tut! 'Girls in the clergy vestry...!'. Sadly we had a very 'anti-women' Verger who refused to verge on the days the 'women' were serving. However he soon changed his mind when he realised we were here to stay, and more female servers were recruited. In the early 1990s I was

asked to take on the rôle of Sacristan to train the servers and issue the rota. This appointment didn't go down well with one particular family and caused a mutiny amongst the servers. I think my sister and I served every Sunday for over a month until we managed to train our husbands, best friends and a few others who came to our rescue. About a year later, the family who had walked out asked if they could come back as they missed it so much. Two of my previous servers have gone on to ordained ministry which is a great thrill.

In 1994 the then Verger and Parish Clerk, John Haines decided he preferred the paperwork side of his job but didn't really care for the verging side, so he split the job and asked me to take on the verger's rôle. With fear and trepidation I verged for the first time on the evening of Advent Sunday 1994. Our vicar encouraged us to join the Guild of Vergers but it took over 2 years for us to achieve enrolment as John twice managed to injure himself prior to the admittance ceremonies.



As we were a team, he wouldn't allow me to be enrolled into the Guild without him.

Sadly, John Haines retired in 1999 so a new Parish Clerk was employed. He was a clerk in holy orders whose licence had temporarily been suspended. However he was not a conscientious colleague and the church had no option but to let him go in 2001.

Along with my role of verger, by now, I was also the Vicar's secretary and increasingly I had been taking on more and more of the administration, so the church asked me to consider taking on the whole role of Parish Administrator, Vicar's Secretary, Verger & Sacristan.

In 2019, a PA was appointed for our new Vicar and this has lightened the load considerably.

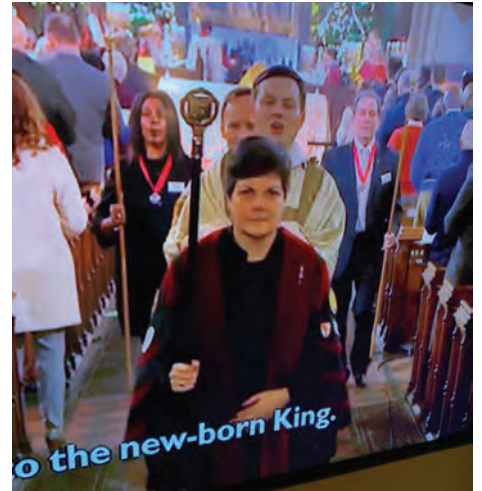
At first I wasn't a stalwart of attending the Guild's Annual Training Conference however through my great friendship with Stephen Haude & Irene Money (we are known as the three musketeers) I attended my first conference in 2008 and haven't looked back since. Since 2013 I've been a regular attendee of the VGEV conference in the USA, until coronavirus hit.

My role as Liaison Officer comes to an end next summer. I have enormously enjoyed being a National Officer. I currently look after the small number of HQ Members and am Secretary of the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch and previous Chair.

I am very fortunate in that I am supported in both my church work and my Guild membership by my husband,

Melvyn. I have a daughter, two married step-children, four boisterous grandchildren and numerous God-children, who all keep me grounded.

Denise Mead
CEGV Liaison Officer



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OXFORD BRANCH - AN UNCONVENTIONAL OUTREACH



Set among some 92 acres of leafy parkland in east Berkshire lies a park home site within the civil parish of Warfield, between Bracknell and Windsor. Warfield Park became a site for mobile homes in 1947 with planning permission for ... '12 caravans'. The Park owner, Captain Ian MacLaren, decided this would be an exciting new venture having left his life in the army behind him. Now there are over 500 park homes, the majority being for retired folk. Today these park homes are large, luxurious and certainly can't be considered 'caravans'.

The land was originally acquired by Colonel John Walsh, a friend of Clive of India, in 1765 having made a fortune

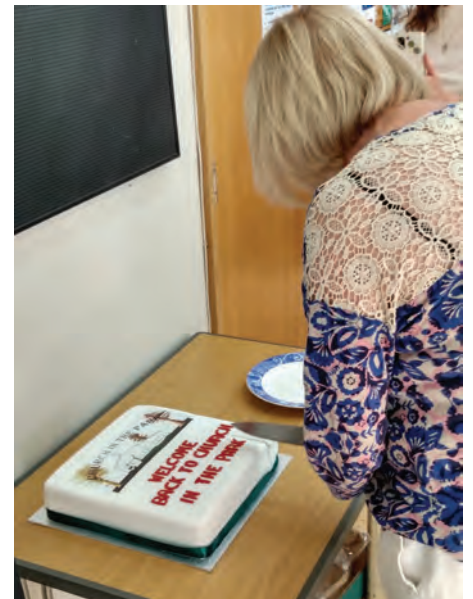


with the East India Company. A century later Lady Jane Walsh planted the huge Wellingtonia trees still visible on the skyline today.

The Warfield parish church of St Michael's, a grade 2 listed building, has been a site of Christian worship for over 1000 years. Land belonging to the crown was given by Queen Emma in 1016 for 'a chapel to be built'.

Long-time park residents Dave and Thelma French were involved in the parish church's first plant in 1994. This was the congregation of All Saints, the result of a vision by the then vicar Revd Canon Dr Brian Meardon. It was the first of other church plants over the next two decades. Sadly, various attempts to start a regular Christian worship group in the park over many years were unsuccessful until late 2015.

Revd Janet Taft, an associate minister from St Michael's (now retired), gathered a willing band of volunteers and the first meeting was held in the park's Community Hall in the summer of 2016, the Park management having given their blessing for us to use the hall. A simple service of sung worship and Holy Communion was followed by tea, home-made cake and conversations. Catharine Mabuza, our vicar, and the associate ministers come to preach and preside at the Communion. Church in the Park (CITP) services were monthly until March 2020 when we were forced to cancel them due to the pandemic.



A new start took place in the hall on August 10th 2021 with 27 folk attending. It was a joyous occasion on a rare day of bright sunshine.

Richard and Chris Page head up the team and were pastorally active during the lockdown with regular phone calls to everyone, socially distanced visits when urgently required and with hand-delivered gifts at Christmas and Easter. No mean feat as Warfield Park is frequently described as labyrinthine!

Lockdown has hit many of the residents hard with lack of physical contact with other residents and family members, many also struggling to embrace on-line technology. They are so excited to have CITP back in the diary, now and in the months and years to come.

Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD. Psalm 89 v.15 (NLT)

Dave and Thelma French
Warfield Park August 2021

Dave and Thelma were admitted into the Guild of Vergers at Eton College in July 2018.

A NEW BRANCH CHAPLAIN FOR THE DURHAM AND NEWCASTLE WITH CARLISLE BRANCH

The Rev'd Alan Raine was inducted as the new chaplain of our branch by the National Chaplain, the Rev'd. Rosemary Durward on a beautifully sunny day, the 15th July 2021 at Saint Paul's Church, Jarrow.

Members of the branch assembled for the Eucharist, celebrated by Fr. Alan, during which he was inducted.



Later we were treated to a short talk about the history of the church from Jimmy Guy, the vergier. During the talk members were also able to see a verified relic of the Venerable Bede and were shown some of the irreverent choir stall fillials.

Branch members attending were, Gordon Scott, Branch Chairman; Roy Foster, Branch Treasurer; Patricia Foster, Branch Secretary; Jeffrey Hewitt; Jane Gorrie; The Rev'd Tom Cameron;



Jacqueline Wyness; Vanessa Caisley, and Tom Appleby, with The Rev'd Alan Raine and The Rev'd Rosemary Durward. The Branch would like to thank the National Chaplain, The Rev'd Rosemary Durward, for officiating on this special day.

After the service members enjoyed a meal at a local restaurant. The photograph includes a member of the St. Paul's Church guides.



YORK BRANCH

Our first meeting together, since before Covid, took place on the 14th June. We gathered at Holy Trinity, Micklegate. There was a good turn out and we were especially pleased to meet Jonathon, the new Virger from Hull Minster, who was supported by Dave, Virger emeritus and their team from the Minster. After the service we went round to Jacob's Well and shared a picnic and got re-acquainted with each other. Gail told us what was happening in Ripon and that they now have a new Director of Music and one of the new stone carvings is being made into a likeness of the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines.

Val gave us a top tip for cleaning brass, a product called Maas it doesn't leave any residue.

Our next meeting is being held on Monday 6th September, again at Holy Trinity Micklegate, York.

In other news it was a double celebration for the branch at this year's Annual Training Conference and Retreat. Our Publicity Officer and Virger at Sheffield Cathedral, Ben, who also represented the branch at the whole conference, was presented with his Foundation Certificate, and Samantha, Virger at Bradford Cathedral, travelled with her daughter Emily for the Opening Eucharist and Guild Congregation, to be awarded her certificate and hood as she received her Diploma with Honours. Congratulations to both! (the photo of Ben and Samantha was taken by, Samantha's daughter, Emily).

Ben Elliott-Hill
Publicity Officer





A LETTER FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ.

At the time of writing we have emerged from the varying stages of lockdown and the vaccine roll out has been proved effective in stemming hospital admissions and deaths. Our Churches are beginning to be filled with worshippers and our doors once again open in welcome.

Your ministry as Vergers is fundamental in enabling this. As I pray for refreshment and re-engagement for you, we echo that prayer for the people who live in our parishes and worship in our Churches. Your role of welcome and hospitality, alongside the clergy, wardens and lay leaders, will be crucial.

Naturally we are cautious about a return to the worship and activities we knew before the pandemic and, therefore, it will be different. You have a pivotal role in helping all ages embrace the inevitable changes. More importantly, however, you can walk with them and join in the prayer that all might be renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can help create the appropriate environment for them to deepen their relationship with God and re-engage with each other in fellowship and outreach.

I am encouraged by the story of Lydia in Acts 16.11ff. There are parallels which inspire me:

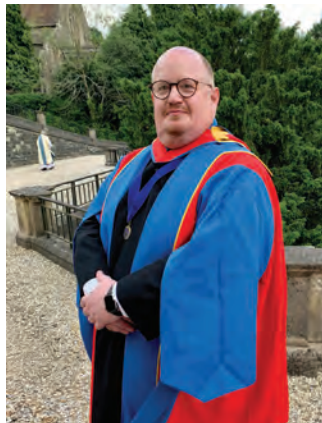
1. Lydia, in Philippi, was at prayer; that's where St Paul found her. She was gathered with others in a familiar place. Our Churches are holy, consecrated, familiar places of prayer in which God speaks to us in the Scriptures, nourishes us in the sacrament and sends out in mission.

2. Lydia was listening to the message and the 'Lord opened her heart' (v14). In those moments of listening, God meets us in the most personal and intimate ways. We pray that those who have felt so distant from God may draw close again. Many have been unable to participate in worship and take the Eucharist. They have also been cut off from loved ones. During lockdown it's as if everything has been 'closed'. We pray that all will be filled afresh with an outpouring of love and life, and their hearts are opened.
3. Lydia opened her home. What a wonderful, precious act of hospitality! The incarnate Jesus grew up in a home with Mary and Joseph and he promises to make his home in each of our homes and hearts. Let us see the Church as a 'home'. Vergers welcome people into the home of the Church. The guests whom you welcome will, we pray, become the closest of friends and the most loving family. Some are already friends and family. Let's discover ways of helping them to be even more at home – a safe, secure home and one in which everyone is valued. It's a home where we are encouraged to flourish and grow both as individuals and as disciples of Christ.

May God pour out upon you the riches of his blessings.

Stephen Ebor

THE 2021 CONFERENCE



MY TIME AT THE CONFERENCE

A YOUNGER (!) PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE ANNUAL GUILD OF VERGERS CONFERENCE AND RETREAT



Although I have been a member of the Guild for almost 9 years there is one annual event I had never been to: the Annual Guild of Vergers Conference and Retreat. I had been to various festivals for both York and Canterbury Provinces, but now, especially having not seen any of my vergger friends from the Guild in almost two years due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it seemed the right time to go.

Despite issues with the journey down (the less said about that the better!), once I was settled in my room (which was a lot better than I was expecting) and had seen some familiar faces, I could start focusing on what the next few days would bring. One advantage of having been to Provincial festivals before was that I was assured of already knowing some of the attendees.

The spectre of Covid-19 still ever present, so in both the Conference Centre, and in the local parish church (used for the daily services) face coverings were still encouraged, we were asked to take a lateral flow test both before attending

and whilst we were there. There was hand sanitiser throughout the complex, and screens on most of the tables in the dining room. A small price to pay so that we could gather in person, unlike last year, especially as this year saw a good number of new delegates, myself included.

The best way to describe the Conference is one of learning, worship, contemplation and fellowship.

Learning: there are teaching sessions to aid professional development. These range from guest speakers to practical sessions. Those who were guest speakers guided us in topics that will help us in our day-to-day work. This year's included the changes in how marriages are registered, preparing for the unexpected (Royal funeral arrangement protocols), and keeping your faith when things are against you (What happened to my spiritual life? Difficult job, difficult people and keeping my faith). The practical sessions included how to be a thurifer, how to hold the verge, and how to set up the robes and elements for services, how to read during a service and lead intercessions, a surgery for those interested in the Guild's Diploma course or assistance for those currently engaged in it, and looking at embroidery.

Worship: at the core of the Conference is worship. Each day started with Morning Prayer and ended with Compline. There was also a Eucharist (Monday was the Opening Eucharist and Guild Congregation where Diploma and Foundation Certificates were presented, the Wednesday Eucharist was the Guild Requiem where past members were remembered, and the Thursday Eucharist was the Closing Eucharist). Other acts of

worship included a Healing Service on the Tuesday evening and Choral Evensong and Benediction on the Wednesday evening. The style of worship was mostly High Anglican/Anglo-Catholic. One of the blessings this year was being able to sing the hymns and the sung parts of the Mass setting, something that hasn't been possible for the last 18 months and, in some of our churches, still isn't for the congregation.

Contemplation: one of the sessions included a quiet morning focusing on a recent major feast day, in this case the Transfiguration of the Lord. A short Bible reading and homily or thought was read and then we would use the quiet interludes to contemplate and meditate on what had been said. There was also free time to enjoy the beautiful surroundings, take in a prayer walk, or enjoy the breathtaking views from the grounds or, for the more adventurous, the nearby hills.

Fellowship: at Conference you are never alone, even if it is your first time and you don't initially know anyone. There were plenty of opportunities for making new friends: meal times, the Monday social evening, evening trips to the local pub, and any other free time.

My abiding memories of this year's conference will include the privilege of being chosen to verge the Opening Eucharist and Guild Congregation, which included receiving my Foundation Certificate; being Thurifer for the Closing Eucharist, and, above all, seeing people I haven't been able to see in nearly two years. The best thing about being around other verggers is the perfect opportunity for networking and sharing experiences. Being part of the Guild means that you'll

always find someone who can help you grow in your rôle, wherever they work - in a parish church or cathedral, whether volunteer, full or part time, retired, newcomer or a lifelong vergers. You will also find out who, like me, will end up in the pub and who will be there until the bitter end (mentioning no names!).

All in all, if you have never been to Conference, it is definitely worth it, and if you are worried about the cost of it, it is worth either talking to your place of work, or applying to the Guild for a bursary.

I returned to Sheffield with a sense that, having got so much out of this conference, it will be the first of many. The fact that it happened at all is fantastic, and that is down to the hard work of all who made it possible. I would like to hope that next year we will not encounter the same restrictions, but only time will tell.

Finally I would like to congratulate those who also received Foundation certificates, and those who received their Diplomas and hoods, to Stephen Stokes

on becoming a Fellow of the Guild, to the Reverend Rosemary Durward, the new National Chaplain, and to say a great big thank you to Canon Maureen for the service and encouragement that she has given as National Chaplain. It was truly fitting that she was bestowed the title of Chaplain Emeritus.

Ben Elliott-Hill
Verger at Sheffield Cathedral and
Publicity Officer for the York Branch

THE 2021 CONFERENCE WAS INSPIRATIONAL FOR ME

Becoming a new member of the Guild of Vergers just before a global pandemic was certainly quite an interesting experience. Just as I was getting to know my fellow members of the East Anglia Branch, I was soon to stop seeing them until the 2021 conference at the beautifully located Elim Conference Centre in Malvern. The first experience of the 2021 Conference will always sit central in my mind: walking into the dining hall for the first time, surrounded by complete and utter strangers (besides the three from my own branch). I'll never forget the very brief feeling of intimidation, that I didn't belong there. I mention that this feeling is brief because throughout the course of our first meal, I was made very much at home by all those who didn't know me. I'll never forget the feeling of confidence that conference gave me, the feeling that I could approach any single person and share in the fellowship of Christ, whether through a seminar or a service, will be unforgettable for years to come.

The 2021 Conference was for me, a good chance to recharge my batteries and come back home refreshed - mind you, if you take part in every activity, you'll feel exhausted by the end! I should emphasise that I never once felt the exhaustion that one usually would through these jam packed days, the adrenaline takes over and the time flies fast. From fascinating guest speakers to a variety of different church services (some of which I never knew played a part in worship), I just wanted to do everything and I nearly did! The most memorable part of Conference

for me had to be the sign up sheet for the different church services that were held throughout the week. The sign up sheet was a chance for us to take on a role within the service, the encouragement being to take on a role in which you are not usually accustomed to. I learnt a lot through this valuable experience and I am now inspired to take on more of a ministerial role within the church at which I am currently based.

Callum Brittain, Great St Mary's, Cambridge



MY REFLECTION OVERALL OF THE CONFERENCE IS ONE OF 'ENLIGHTENMENT'

"Why on earth do you want to go to a Verger's Conference?" asked a friend, and I have to admit as the date approached, I was beginning to wonder "why?" myself. "Aren't they all old people, stuck in their ways and a bit stuffy?" she continued. In truth, I didn't know what to expect, but felt I had committed, so should see it through.

Imagine my surprise when I arrived and found a whole age range of people, from all over the country, from different ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender. As we arrived, we 'Newbies' were introduced to our fellow Vergers and Clergy joining us for the Conference. Many had attended for a number of years, but that didn't detract from them making us feel part of the gang and very welcome.

The setting was lovely. Nestled into the side of the Malvern Hills, the Elim Centre (previously a girls boarding school), was more like a retreat than a college. The grounds had beautiful peaceful walks, including a woodland and an open air swimming pool. For the more adventurous, the Malvern hills beckoned and one of the access footpaths started just behind the accommodation building. The food was varied and appetising, and far too plentiful.

The itinerary was well thought out and spaced enough to avoid feeling rushed, whilst allowing us to attend most events. There were also a number of Eucharist and prayer services to attend, enabling us to pick and choose what felt right for each attendee to participate in, with no pressure.

It seemed to me that many people came for a whole myriad of reasons. Some were there for fellowship, others to refresh their faith in the space that the conference gave them, others to learn new skills and some, just to find out if what they were doing in their workplace was right or wrong.

For me the highlights were to put names to faces, listen to the very entertaining and informative speakers, share best practice and learn new skills. Of particular note was the Healing Service held in the adjacent church, which felt very emotive and genuine. Many commented saying how restorative it felt and I have to say, I agree.



Despite being called a training conference, I feel that there was equal measure in the development of fellowship. Chatting over mealtimes and during free time with colleagues provided a wealth of shared information (especially from those who have been Vergers for many years). Sharing information with vergers from big cathedrals down to small parish churches also provided valuable opportunity to hear about how things work in different environments. Despite not doing many of the activities my cathedral colleagues do, I have now learned how to do some of them, should I be required to in future, like setting out vestments correctly. This felt quite empowering!

It was sobering to attend one of the guest speaker's talks about plans we should all have in place for when State Funerals will be required, and brought into sharp focus our roles within the Church of England and the duties we undertake for the public we serve.

My reflection overall of the Conference is one of 'enlightenment'. I would have no hesitation in encouraging all Vergers take the opportunity to attend a future conference, as everyone will get something out of it however long they have been in the rôle. We always have something new to learn. I came away feeling refreshed spiritually, valued for the role I undertake, and part of a bigger whole... the fellowship of Vergers to which I now feel I really belong.

Penny Waters, St Chad's, Poulton-le-Fylde



FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS

The following roles terms of office are due to come to an end at the next AGM, the current role holders are all eligible for re-election:

- Conference Secretary, this role has become vacant with immediate effect, this role works with the Training Officer to facilitate the bookings for Conference and works with the Conference Centre, this is a three-year appointment.
- Welfare Officer, this Officer works with the National Chaplain and is a prime point of contact for membership with any welfare and pastoral concerns, this is a three-year appointment.
- Guild Chronicler, this role collates and maintains the Guild's historic records, this is a three-year appointment.

- Shop Manager, this role is appointed by the Executive Committee, and looks after the Shop stock while also arranging for the shop to be set up at national events, this is a three-year appointment.
- National Membership Officer, this is a new role set up to replace the Liaison Officer (which is no longer a viable role owing to the General Synods adjustments). This role primary looks after all members who have been displaced from a Branch and are part of the Head Quarter Membership, this is a three-year appointment.

For further information and job descriptions, please contact the General Secretary, CEGVGenSec@gmail.com, a short bio of all those wishing to be considered will be placed into the next magazine and will be shortlisted at the Executive Committee in March for election at the AGM.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ROUND UP & AGM

Following very productive meetings it was agreed, in order to comply with the Conference Centre's Terms and Conditions which stipulate that we must pay the balance for the centre prior to the event. It was agreed within the Executive Council to implement the following aspects:

- Those wishing to take advantage of the Early Bird discount rate are required to pay at least 50% of the fee by the end of the Early Bird offer period.
- Delegates are required to have paid in full six weeks prior to the start of the event.
- If a delegate has a need to cancel prior to this six week date they would be entitled to a 100% refund of monies paid.

The following Officers were formally elected by those in attendance at the AGM:

- National Chairman – John Kirby-Shearer, for a second and final successive term of office for three years.
- National Treasurer – Robert Beattie, for five years.
- Overseas Membership Office – John Campbell, for three years.
- Training Officer – Leslie Mitchelmore, for three years.

While the entire membership, of those eligible to vote, were offered the opportunity to vote in absence, no one exercised this opportunity.

It was advised at the AGM that there was a need of a minor tweak in the Constitution, which was overlooked at the last rewrite. It was agreed, in principle, during the consultation that the Statutes would be able to be adjusted by the Executive Committee (The Constitution would always require the AGM to ratify any changes), however this was not written in and is wanted to be adjusted. This will be discussed at the next Executive Committee, please speak to your Regional Representative for further information.

The next AGM will be held on Monday 15 August 2022, at the Elim Conference Centre





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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.



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