

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Spring 2021 | Issue 310

2020, A VERGERS RETROSPECT FROM CHESTER CATHEDRAL

MEET OUR LIFE MEMBERS
IAN COBB

www.cofegv.org.uk





FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



If it's not too late to say it, a very happy New Year to you all - even if we are still locked down, the end (as they say) is definitely in sight, with vaccines being rolled out and delivered with truly impressive efficiency all over the UK. I'm sure we're all praying for this Easter to be, if possible, more "normal" than last year - we'll just have to wait and see! May I also wish you a fruitful Lent and joyous Easter when it comes...

I'm glad to report that my husband and I are settling well in Galashiels, nestled amongst the foothills of the Southern Uplands - it is truly beautiful as this photo taken from Scott's View, just down the road from us, shows.... it was taken on my way home from an early morning SBCP church service just before Christmas, slight pink streaks of sunrise still evident in the clouds...

We have a slightly official-heavy edition this quarter....

there are some important messages from our General Secretary and our Chairman and an interesting article about VAT in churches from Stephen Stokes. There is a lovely held-over piece from our Guild Chronicler which, although submitted last Spring, is just as pertinent today. There are tellingly few Branch pieces, but I'm hoping that will change over the next few months and the May deadline for the Summer edition will prompt flurry of stories and photos.

Stay well and safe.

Jane Gorrie
CEGV Media Officer



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.

The Oglethorpe Verge

The verge featured on our front cover has been claimed to have been carried before Bishop Owen Oglethorpe, Bishop of Carlisle, on the occasion when he crowned Queen Elizabeth I in 1559. No evidence supports this claim, and it has no hallmarks to establish its date or provenance. It does bear the arms of the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle so was probably made for the cathedral, but it has been judged stylistically to be of seventeenth century date. It is probably the "one silver mace" which is listed in the inventory of 1674. The Verge was substantially repaired by the Goldsmiths' Company in about 1990, in so doing a pocket watch back was found to have been soldered on to one of the ends.

J & M SEWING SERVICE LTD
High Quality Church Robes - Made in England and individually manufactured to order in our Workshop in Newcastle-upon-Tyne

CASSOCKS & SURPLICES
ALBS & COTTAS
CLERICAL BLOUSES
CLERICAL SHIRTS

STOLES & VESTMENTS
CHOIR ROBES
VERGERS ROBES
BANNERS & FRONTALS

Order on-line at www.jandmsewing.com or ask for our free Catalogue
Tel: 0191 232 9589 Fax: 0191 230 1215
email: jandmsewing@btconnect.com
1 Charlotte Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4XF

Established by Joyce Davison & Maureen Waterston in 1980

Badges, Lanyards, Medals, Enamel Badges, Name Badges, Name Plates, Engraved Signs, Printed Pens, Mugs, Awards, Rubber Stamps.

ALL AVAILABLE FROM THE GUILD SHOP



FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



In my garden, I have a large pot in which I planted about 15 daffodil bulbs. To my surprise, I noticed yesterday, that they have grown and that the green shoots are now about three inches long. Quite how they have managed to survive with the snow and sharp frosts we have been experiencing is a miracle. Hopefully there will be a lovely pot of green and yellow to welcome the spring. It gives us all hope that new shoots in our gardens herald new beginnings. As we head towards the end of yet another lockdown, I can only hope and look forward to the start of 2021 and that we can start to talk and plan our futures after what has been a dismal 2020. As I write to you all, my thoughts are with many of you, hoping that you have received the first dose of the much-anticipated vaccination, with the promise of a second dose in the near future.

This is a time that all Branches will be thinking about their Annual General Meetings. One thing that has come out of the Covid-19 crisis is the sudden rise in our technical skills in using computers for Zoom meetings and services. I hope that as many of you as possible can continue the business of the Guild by having meetings, both formal and informal to keep in touch with each other.

"This is a time that all Branches will be thinking about their Annual General Meetings. One thing that has come out of the Covid-19 crisis is the sudden rise in our technical skills in using computers for Zoom meetings and services."

In this edition of The Virger there is a short questionnaire that I invite you all to complete. It is intended to help the Executive Committee plan our major events for 2021, Government advice permitting. Please do take a few moments to let us know your thoughts regarding our Conference and Festivals. Of course, the Conference venue will also have a say in whether we can meet or not. Whatever happens, we will let you all know the outcomes.

I want to end this round up with a piece of good news. Last year, the Guild was approached by Lambeth Palace to nominate a verger to undertake the post of Ostiarius for the Convocation of Canterbury. I submitted two names to Lambeth for their consideration and I am pleased to announce that they have appointed Stephen Stokes, our General Secretary, to the post.

I hope you all stay warm, safe and sane during the next few months and I hope that we can all see each other very soon.

John Kirby-Shearer
Chairman



CHARLES FARRIS
CHANDLERS 1845
LONDON

For secure on line ordering, browsing new products and seasonal offers visit
www.charlesfarris.co.uk






Tel: 01747 861839
Charles Farris Limited, Quarry Fields, Mere, Wiltshire BA12 6LA

FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



I would like to share with you words written with remarkable clarity, by Winchester Cathedral's Emeritus Dean James Atwell and included in the Order of Service for his funeral in January this year:

"My faith is built on the primary insight that the world is deeply gifted. It comes as a present. Creation is beautiful and Jesus' resurrection invites us all to set out on a journey of discovery searching/ seeking for beauty, truth and love. You cannot go wrong!"

It was in January 2020, that Dean James and his wife, Laura, sent out an invitation to fellow pilgrims old and new, to visit Lebanon this Spring, hoping to complete the jigsaw of their trips to the Middle East. So much feels incomplete now, so much is lost. Multiply loss for every family in the land, in some shape or form and it seems fitting that Lent takes us among rocks and stones; reminders of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. It seems equally fitting

that it was a stone, a boulder, that was rolled away, to reveal the place where Jesus' crucified body had lain and, to those who know, the fulfilment of Jesus' promise of Paradise.

The Old English word, *Lencten*, from which Lent is derived, means Spring, when the days begin to get longer and the miracle of nature erupts. Lockdown can't wipe out the memory of my own pilgrimage to Ephesus in the Spring, when from a rocky hillside, I watched as a whole colony of storks got on with the task of feeding their chicks – unexceptional, except these birds with 2 metre wingspans, landed in nests that were balanced on the top of telegraph poles.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, the city of Ephesus was a thriving port. Over the years, the coastline has receded and storks now fly a round trip of some 9 miles for food across barren territory. If ever there was a symbol for battling against adversity

during this pandemic, it is surely the stork, overcoming the challenges of the natural world, so that God's gift of life becomes a gift for us all.

Most of us connect storks with newborn babies. The Medieval imagination saw the stork as representative of kindness. We all blossom with kindness. After such a long winter, when suffering has been the lot of so many, we can be thankful for kindness given and received and for strength, courage and fortitude born of unquestioning faith. In memory of all whom we have loved and lost, let us pray that we will continue to see and witness to God's gifts of beauty, truth and love, in Christ Jesus who was with God from the very beginning; Christ who through His glorious resurrection, brings forth a new Creation for a waiting world.

Believing passionately in Christ's victory over death, may I wish you all, a very Happy Easter!

Mthr Rosemary



The Very Revd James Atwell leading a pilgrimage in the Holy Land



The Stork, The Aberdeen Bestiary, Folio 49r, The University of Aberdeen

FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY



Over the last year we have all been working hard to reduce the spread of this virus and keep ourselves, loved ones, and complete strangers safe. Here in the Guild we have been doing as much as we can to help that by running meetings online, continually updating the Guild Website (www.cofegv) and where needed cancelling in-person events.

At the beginning of this year the Standing Committee met on your behalf to look forward and to see how we can better facilitate meetings and suchlike. The Executive Committee will also be meeting to look at how we can meet together again in a safe way.

It is hoped that the Annual Training Conference and Retreat will be able to go ahead in August. This will not only enable us to meet again in person but also to give thanks and recognition to Canon Maureen for her outstanding service as our National Chaplain. It will also be our first opportunity to formally welcome and invest Mthr Rosemary Durward who has been our National Chaplain since August 2019, and enable us to come together and pray for her in person as she leads us spiritually.

However, all of this is dependant on many factors; where we are as a country in fighting this pandemic; what if any restrictions the Government has in place; where we are as individuals to go out and interact again; and what the Conference Centre and their staff have in place.

You should have found, in your magazine, a questionnaire about

Conference and suchlike (also available online at www.bit.ly/CEGV2021). We would ask everyone to complete the questionnaire, so that we can give your personal views to the Executive Committee. This will enable the Executive Committee to be to make well informed decisions about how we can move forward this year. While we do ask you to complete this information, at no point will we hold you to the information provided.

Conference 2021 & Events Questionnaire

As you are aware, in 2020 we had to postpone our National Training Conference owing to Covid-19. I am asking you, as valued members, to give our Executive Committee some guidance towards our regular meetings this year. The Government is indicating that travel both nationally and internationally could be severely restricted yet again this year.

The Executive Committee will discuss this at our next meeting before a decision is made. Consultation with the conference centre will also be taken into account.

*** Required**

Email address *
Your email:

Name:
Your answer:

Branch *
Your answer:

Should we postpone Conference 2021? *
 Yes
 No

If we went ahead with Conference in 2021, would you attend? *
 Yes
 No
 Maybe

Life in the Guild continues and as you will be aware there are a number of positions that are looking to be filled this year namely:

National Chairman (3 years)
 National Treasurer (5 years)
 Overseas Membership Officer (3 years)
 Training Officer (3 years)

The closing date for all positions is **Friday 11th June 2021**. Completed nominations forms for these national roles together with a short biography must be received by me prior to or on that date.

As you will have noted amongst the changes to the Constitution & Statutes (held by each Branch Chairman and available as downloads via the website), we have now made it possible for members to vote in absentia. As set out in the Statutes I am required to formally notify each member (via their Branch Officers) 45 days prior to the meeting, of the nominations so that you can cast your vote – if you are not intending to vote in person. All absentee votes, which must be by letter only, must be received by the General Secretary no later than 14 days before the election. We respectfully ask each member to read clause 5.2 of the Statutes. If you do not have access to this, please contact the General Secretary prior to the closing date.

We will be discussing with the Executive Committee the options available if we cannot hold the Conference and Retreat in Malvern this year, and how we can conduct the AGM in a virtual way. I truly hope that we do not go down the route of Handforth Parish Council which have recently hit the news – so I ask you to please keep the Executive Committee in your prayers at this time.

We look forward to the day when we can all be together again.

HMRC GUIDANCE ON VAT ON RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Is your place of Worship registered for VAT?

Early in February I attended a Zoom session, which was run by the Association of English Cathedrals, on how VAT should be charged on religious services. Over 100 people attended, many from Cathedrals and larger Parish Churches.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have recently updated their guidance for VAT specifically for Religious Services.

When your place of worship is used for an event, and it is VAT registered, some aspects are to be invoiced including VAT at standard (20%) rate, and some are considered outside the scope of VAT. It was generally agreed that if you are invoicing for an item which pertains to worship then it falls outside of the scope of VAT and therefore no VAT is to be added to the invoice.



HOLY NAME EMBROIDERY

New Commissions, Restoration, Conservation,
Repairs etc... Undertaken
Welsh Marches Based

Dee Caulton-Ball
Ecclesiastical Embroiderer

TEL: 01547 220000 or 07890514888
E-Mail: deecb@hotmail.com

Statutory Fees set out in the Anglican Table of Parochial Fees and charged by parish churches and cathedrals which are also parish churches, and any equivalent fees charged by cathedrals which are not also parish churches are outside the scope of VAT.

Supplies integral to delivering acts of worship, which are outside the scope of VAT, include:

- Hire of the religious building, or part thereof, for the service
- Provision of a minister of religion and other staff necessary for the service
- Provision of religious music by the provider of the service, including; organ and organist, choir, piano and pianist, worship band and bell ringing.

Other supplies made in connection with an act of worship which are essentially commercial in nature and which could be provided externally, such as supplies of catering, the hiring of external musicians, flowers and printing of orders of service, are regarded as business supplies and so are liable to VAT at the prevailing rates.

For example, if your Church held a Carol Service for the local school and flowers were included in the hire and an invoice was raised, then the proportionate part of the invoice for flowers would be at standard VAT rate. The hire of the Church itself for the Carol Service would be outside the scope of VAT, so none would be charged on that part of the invoice. Should you charge an extra fee for additional chairs, then this, too, would also be outside the scope of VAT as it would be regarded as an item essential for the act of worship.

Whereas if the same school were looking to hire your church for a Carol Concert with flowers and chairs, then the whole invoice raised would be subject to VAT as a Concert is not a religious service. Consequently all aspects of this event would be subject to VAT no matter that they take place in a church.

More information can be found via this link:
http://bit.ly/CEGV_VAT

Stephen Stokes

BRANCH DIGEST

LONDON

ZOOM TRIUMPHS OVER DOOM!

One year ago most of us knew nothing of Zoom. Who'd ever have thought what a mighty tool it would turn out to be? It's kept our churches alive with online services, choirs still singing, our beloved Guild and Branches still meeting and isolated loved ones kept in contact. I'm sure my experiences of Zoom are similar to many of yours. I here relate my own relationship with Zoom for your comparison.

Hi-Tech! Words that put fear into the hearts of we oldies! My branch (*London, Southwark & Chelmsford*) subscribed to a paid Zoom account late last year. This lifted any time restriction on meeting length. I was sort of appointed branch 'Zoom Master' and hit the ground running determined to somehow master the tech intricacies. Behold! It wasn't as difficult as I first thought. It just needs a bit of patience and to read the wealth of help the Internet affords.

Arranging and scheduling meetings requires that you download and install 'Zoom Client'. Folk that receive an email invite with a link to join a scheduled meeting do not need to download.

We recently had our branch virtual 'annual dinner'. Some of us dressed for the occasion (I wore DJ's). About 16 members turned up. We sipped our Merlot and ate our sandwiches as we rejoiced in seeing each other with a good chat and lots of laughter. Our Chaplain, Revd John Ackland ended the evening in beautiful prayer. Our next Zoom venture will be our Annual General Meeting that will also include several new members being admitted to the Guild by our Chaplain. We also have regular meetings with Vergers of the American Guild.

Then there's my own church with online services, bible study, virtual lunch chats (with pint in hand) and doing our choir videos. The choir! O boy, that was a real learning curve! I sing tenor (the only tenor at present). Our Director of Music emails a video of him conducting and another of him playing his special keyboard at home. Then I have to listen through earphones as I record my video of me singing my tenor line of the anthem. I then send this off to our tech man who stitches all the choir voices together in perfect synch. We've done some quite complex anthems such as 'O Thou the Central Orb' and Cantate Domino.

Studying the potential of Zoom, I found 'background & filters' in the Zoom settings. You need a plain green background to make this work. I procured two metres of green hospital scrubs material on eBay, secured the top edge to a batten of wood and hang it from my clothes airer placed behind me. You can then use any photo you wish to be your background. During meetings I have sat next to the Queen, the Prime Minister, on Santa's sleigh and even been flanked by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. I've also been part of glorious scenes from all over the world. It's just magical.

Socially, I meet with our Branch Chair, Irene Money and Secretary Denise Mead regularly on Zoom just to see how the branch and we are doing. So there we are. You have the inside info on this ancient Verger and how he got to grips with 'hi-tech'. It's been a Godsend during these sometimes lonely and difficult times. Soon we will be back in our own churches full of worshippers singing praises to our Lord and Saviour. But I think Zoom will remain a big part of our lives.

Stephen Haude (Branch Correspondent)





OXFORD BRANCH

Our Branch AGM was scheduled for 19th January 2021 and, in spite of the lockdown, we managed to have our meeting thanks to modern technology. The current Management Team, with the agreement of all the members, were happy to extend their respective roles for the next year. Reports from the Management Team were produced along with the Financial Statement and all the relevant papers sent to our Members on 21st January. We felt that this was a great accomplishment

in view of the Covid-19 Lockdown but look forward to the AGM in 2022 when, hopefully, we can all be together again.

We have had to postpone our planned activities because of the restrictions, but we have been able to keep in touch via email and telephone so that none of our Members feel left out. It is very important to keep the connection going, especially in these difficult times.

We wish to extend our Easter greetings to all our Colleagues and Friends knowing that many of you will not be directly involved (some for a second year), in this moving and joyous Festival in the Church's year.

Heather Ringrose
Branch Secretary
Oxford Branch

OXFORD BRANCH

The following was written by Lynnette Derry, (Branch Member and Verger of St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxon), but it was too late to be included in the Winter edition of The Virger. However, we feel it is still relevant.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

The approach of Christmas has always heralded a festive fervour, complete with fairy lights, ribboned gifts under the tree and sparking log fires. The joyous heart of it for the Christian believer is of course the anticipation of a great celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. 'Alleluia, hear the angels sing.'

As I stood outside the west door or my church, St John the Baptist in Burford, two evenings ago, I gazed upon its silent stone walls and blind windows in the enveloping darkness with a certain melancholy. The challenging shroud of Covid-19 and ensuing crises locally, nationally and internationally had at times felt insurmountable as, globally, people moved into a virtual, bubbled, anxious existence. As a verger, closing the doors to the church felt like isolating God Himself. I was snapped out of my reverie by a voice, singing – badly. Gazing up at an open window of the school boarding house, a young boy was framed within the light, and belting out the chorus of a Christmas classic,

Angels We Have Heard on High, but he had twisted the lyrics from, 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' to 'Gloria, eating Chelsea's day-olds!' Hear the angels sing, indeed. It was a moment of levity in the dark and cold. A reminder that God wasn't in quarantine; He was in the celebration of the lyrics of a carol that illuminates His incarnation; in the prayers of His children and 'Our comfort in the midst of suffering'.

Suffering and struggle are a fundamental of life... They help us scale those spiritual heights, and depend on God's authority, even though at moments the struggle can feel like a curse. Three days before Lockdown One, my eldest son, Daniel was diagnosed with bowel cancer; young, active and recently married, this news was devastating... He was admitted to hospital immediately for open surgery with no family to comfort him by his bedside, under the threat of Covid-19 whilst physically vulnerable to any infection. I cried out to God for my child and blamed Him for Daniel's illness. The answer: 'Be still and know that I am God'. I felt the divine authority and strength and comfort of The Father; I felt my own helplessness and need of

Him – so I prayed. I laid the misery and hurt at His feet and placed my hope and trust and faith in Him, that His will be done.

With Christmas upon us, I am happy and thankful to declare that my son is in cancer recovery and in God's Hands. Praise the Lord – a truly precious gift of life. Prime Minister, Boris Johnson had repeatedly warned it would be a "Bumpy road to Christmas" with underlying warnings of cancellation. As Christians we know that God is the ultimate authority; He loves us and equips us for those stormy times we face. He delights in our rejoicing of Him through prayer and song – even with twisted lyrics – and laughter and love. As we come together this Christmas Day, albeit virtually or bubbled or on the end of a telephone call, let us delight in His gift and make Him the first one we turn to and not the last: "Hope of all the earth thou art, dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart".

Grace and Peace to you all.

Merry Christmas!

Lynnette Derry

YORK BRANCH

When Ben, our Press Officer, asked if I had anything for the magazine I was thrilled.

Although on the face of it many churches and Cathedrals are closed and some Virgers are furloughed others sadly have been let go. Would there be much to report? The answer is yes, with God there is always a light shining.

As individuals we continue at home with our daily offices, private prayer and a feeling of closeness to God uninterrupted as we take care of our places of worship quietly.

Two of our members, Ben and Samantha, have taken advantage of the lull to finish course modules on the CEGV Diploma course. Well done both of you!

One church in our Branch area, St Leonard's at Molescroft, is open and thriving.

Molescroft was mentioned in the Domesday Book and is in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Situated on the outskirts of Beverley beyond the Wall.

St Leonard's Parish church was built in 1896 with the Chancel being added in 1979. In 2001 a vestry, kitchen and toilet were also added. A brick-built building with a warm welcoming interior. Andrew, Church Warden and an Associate member and Kevin, retired Virger from Beverley Minster, are active in the church and the community. Sending out 70 newsletters, all hand written keeping the Congregation and the community in touch with what is going on. The church opens on Saturday mornings for private prayer and on Sundays services take place and people can ring either of them to book a place to make sure everything is prepared and safe.

They continue to support the Salvation Army by arranging collections.

So please, let us take a little time to remember them all in our prayers. At the time of going to press we have just had our AGM, results are as follows:

AGM Via Zoom and Postal Ballot

- Chairperson - Su Graves
- Treasurer - Alan Gardner
- Press officer - Ben Elliott-Hill
- Chaplain - Reverend Marian Gardner
- Secretary - position remains vacant

We made no plans to meet in person, but will continue to pursue the Zoom Option..

We have had a member transfer over from National and enquiries from the newly appointed Virger at Hull Minster. Let us all continue to pray for one another, support each other by phone,

letter or email and think about where we would like to meet up once it is safe to do so.

God bless.

Su Graves. Chairperson



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

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch

Patricia Platt, Margaret Scott

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.



A PLEA FROM THE NATIONAL TREASURER

Please, at risk of hand-cramp, write out 'Church of England Guild of Vergers' **in full** on any cheques you send the National Treasurer or Shop Manager. (The Training Conference has its separate account, 'CEGV Conference Account'.) Our bank has grown stricter about the payee name on cheques we deposit in our main account, and will not accept 'CEGV' as an abbreviation. Many cheques payable to 'CEGV' have continued to slip through, but recently a few have been rejected after deposit.

With thanks for your co-operation.



FOR YOUR DIARY MEMBERS

Monday 9 – Thursday 12 August 2021

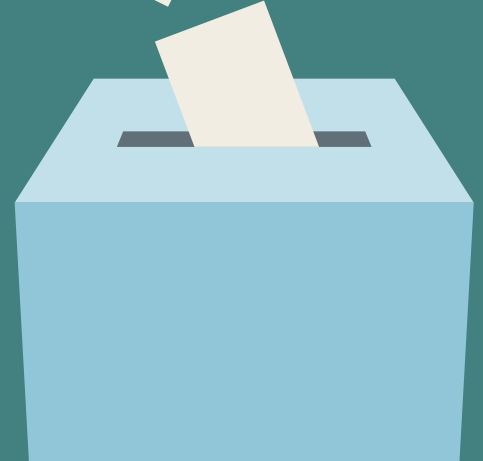
Annual Training Conference Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern. Anyone wishing to come should contact Margaret Burston on CEGVConference@gmail.com

We are pleased that, subject to further restrictions, we have booked next year's conference and we look forward to welcoming you to this annual meeting.

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



FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS



There are a number of roles that are due for election at National Level at the Guild's AGM (to be held in August). Namely:

National Chairman (3 years)
National Treasurer (5 years)
Overseas Membership Officer (3 years)
Training Officer (3 years)

All these positions are open to any member of the Guild, save that of National Chairman, who must be a Full Member.

Absentee Voting is permitted at the AGM (Statutes 5.2) and therefore completed Nomination Forms (available from your Branch) must be submitted by 1 June in order for the General Secretary to advise all members of those standing in the next edition of the Virger.

Please note that you may not submit an Absentee Vote and then vote in person, and that only Full Members are entitled to vote.

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.

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...

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. I am now enjoying having retired in June of last year and having time and opportunity to develop new initiatives world wide. When COVID travel restrictions ease, being in retirement will give me time to pay extra visits to the USA (mainly fuelled by the migration of our son to Washington DC last July) and to continue and to further enhance relationships with members of the VGEC.



VERGERS THROUGH THE AGES

In this time of furloughed vergers and staff of Churches and Cathedrals we may ask ourselves when will we be able to do our bit in the House of the Lord again.

At the time of writing (May 2020) although not furloughed myself, the request came for me "to work from home". How on earth can I work from home was my thought? You might as well cut off my right arm... As I pondered on this I hit an idea, as I was able to pop into the Cathedral on my permitted security check a few times a week with my armfuls of laundry, headed back home with me. For almost three weeks my washing machine never stopped nor did the iron. At one point almost every bit of white material that the cathedral owns was in my spare room.

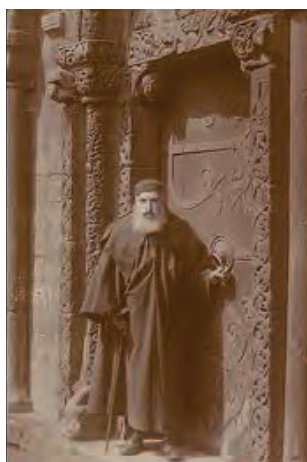
In the odd moment between waiting for loads of washing to be done I started having a bit of a sort out of the files of verger-related stuff which one inevitably accumulates over the years (and if you are anything like me, never get round to sorting). Well, as you can imagine, one thing led to another and now my bedroom and kitchen are now completely overrun with stacks of papers, waiting to be shredded or put back into a more cohesive order.

As I was looking at old photos I started to realise that my eye was drawn to those figures of Vergers that were standing so proudly at doors. This is possibly because standing at doors has become a thing as we clap for our NHS and essential workers who are doing a marvellous job on the frontline dealing with the pandemic. So as a

reminder of what we are and how we will once again care for our places of worship here are a few images of Vergers throughout time standing proud and ready to respond with a warm welcome. Ps yes, they are all men - I guess women are not so vain as to want to pose outside a door. That could be our "out of lockdown" challenge to us - to get some more up to date photos.

If you feel you would like to have your photo added to the Guild archive just send it to me. Don't forget to include your name, date and place, and PS - try to include the door key.

James Armstrong.
Guild Chronicler



Elias Wallingforda



Francis Norman Gresley Grey,
Whitley Bay



George McMicken, Cartmel Priory



Harry Swain, St Marks



Michael Rivers



Robert Foggin, Corbridge



Ron Greatrex

"As I was looking at old photos I started to realise that my eye was drawn to those figures of Vergers that were standing so proudly at doors."

MEET OUR LIFE MEMBERS

IAN COBB



The photographs are me with my father outside St Mary's, with the clock and also the tubular bell ropes (the bells were installed to commemorate the end of WW1).

I became a member of the Church of England Guild of Vergers, as a young man, on June 3rd 1970 at the age of 22. The service of admittance took place at Worlingham Church, Suffolk.

My journey started with my family attending St Mary's, Walton, Felixstowe. When I was 12 years old my father Walter became caretaker of the Church Hall and a year later was installed as the Verger at St Mary's. He held this post for 26 years until his death in 1986. During my teenage years I helped my father which led to me becoming a Verger too.

After his death the PCC asked my wife and I to take over as caretakers of the hall and act as Vergers at the church. We were honoured to be asked and duly accepted. The role was varied and also included winding the church clock weekly (still being done today) as well as playing the tubular bells at weddings. This we did for 25 years before retiring from this paid part-time work in 2010. However, I still am the Verger for funerals and weddings when required.

I am currently the Branch Chairman for the East Anglia Branch (formerly Ipswich) and have been continuously for over 25 years since January 1994. When I became Chairman, membership had dropped to about 5 but over the years I have strived to increase our numbers. I am pleased to say that our membership is currently 30.

On May 8th 2012 I was made a Life Member of the Guild at Newcastle, which I am very honoured to be.



HAYES & FINCH
ESTABLISHED 1882

One of the World's Finest
Manufacturers & Suppliers of Church Furnishings



0845 450 5593 sales@hfltd.com
www.hfltd.com

2020, A VERGERS RETROSPECT FROM CHESTER CATHEDRAL

At the end of the year, it's become tradition for me to choose one photo from each month of the year gone by.

This year, given how it has been, I thought I would share these instances with fellow Vergers across the country. God bless you, and send you a happy new year.

JANUARY

In **January** we held a very moving service remembering the atrocities of the holocaust. The Nave had a train track running down the centre aisle, leading to a star of David where the congregation laid candles.



FEBRUARY

In **February** we had a display set up of our former Dean Bennet's cope, scarf and academic hood. 2020 was his 100th anniversary since he was installed as our Dean



MARCH

In **March**, we joined with the nation to close our doors. One of the last jobs the Vergers did, was to empty the Aumbry with reserve Sacrament in.



APRIL

In **April**, we hoisted a NHS flag to celebrate and raise awareness of the amazing work of the front line staff.



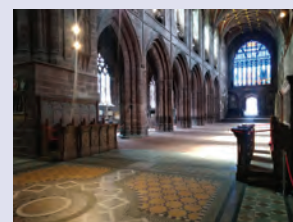
MAY

In **May**, the Vergers caught up on the online world of Zoom!



JUNE

In **June** we were allowed back to our places of worship for private prayer and quiet reflection. Our Cathedral was empty of Chairs, with just the Nave and South Transept open.





JULY

In **July** we were able to offer services and acts of worship again; filling in the attendance register was a joyous experience for a change!



AUGUST

In **August** one of our Vergers dived into the pond to rescue a baby Pigeon!



SEPTEMBER

In **September** it sunk in just how much had changed over the past year. We had no live streaming six months ago & now we find ourselves live streaming on a seemingly daily basis!



OCTOBER

In **October** we were able to have Ordination services, and this photo of our Nave Dais where they took place was taken the night before!



NOVEMBER

In **November** we entered a second nationwide lock down, but we were allowed to remain open for private prayer and quiet contemplation. Our Vergers were on hand for welcoming those who wanted to come in.



DECEMBER

In **December** we were Guest Tweeters for @OurCoELike A thoroughly enjoyable week where we attempted to share the work and ministry of the Vergers to a wider community.



With thanks to our Vergers; Francis Hills and Gareth Rainsforth for their photos, and thank you to our Volunteers for all the help and support they give the Cathedral.

Corentyn Smith
Head Verger, Chester Cathedral



NATIONAL CONTACTS

National Chairman

Mr John Kirby-Shearer,
MA, Dip GV (Honoris), FCEGV
Mobile: 07891 168133
email: CEGVNatChair@gmail.com

General Secretary

Mr Stephen Stokes, Dip GV Hons
Mobile: 07968 111240
email: CEGVGenSec@gmail.com

National Treasurer

Mr Robert Beattie, MA
Tel: 01905 619429
Mobile: 07968 290319
email: CEGVNatTreas@gmail.com

National Chaplain

The Rev'd Rosemary Durward,
MLitt, MA, BSc (Econ)
Tel: 01932 860223
Mobile: 07740 825802
email: CEGVNatChap@gmail.com

Liaison Officer

Mrs Denise Mead
Tel: 020 8688 5971 (Home)
020 8688 8104 (Work)
email: CEGVLiaison@gmail.com

Training Administrator

Mrs Susan Ansell, Dip GV
Tel: 01483 548980
email: CEGVTrainReg@gmail.com

Conference Administrator

Mrs Margaret Burston, Dip GV
Mobile: 07947 347000
email: CEGVConference@gmail.com

Media Officer

Mrs Jane Gorrie
Mobile: 07866 401469
email: CEGVMedia@gmail.com

Welfare Officer

Mrs Irene Money, MBE, Dip GV
Tel: 020 8807 0232
email: CEGVWelfare@gmail.com

Overseas Membership Officer

Mr John Campbell, BEM, FBGU, FCEGV
Mobile: 07733 276335
email: CEGVOverseas@gmail.com

Mailing Address

Mr Stephen Stokes, Dip GV Hons
General Secretary
The Church of England Guild of
Vergers
Kemp House
152 – 160 City Road
London
EC1V 2NX

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

Find us on



<http://bit.ly/CofEGV>