

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Summer 2023 | Issue 319



**SHEFFIELD FESTIVAL
- THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS**

THE JOURNEY

www.cofegv.org.uk





FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



Thank you to all those who have sent in contributions for this edition - the overarching theme is the Ebor Festival at Sheffield Cathedral. Those who went patently enjoyed the day - there are three different reports within, each different, and a wealth of photos. The enthusiasm of those organising and those visiting is testament to the hard work by all involved - hopefully the Cantuar Festival in Croydon will be even better attended and just as full of fellowship and fun.

There are also some of the usual round-up reports from branches, telling of their recent escapades and a couple of previews of upcoming activities, although nowhere as many as I'd like to be able to flag up... and dates for your diary for National events, including the upcoming Training Conference and Retreat about which there is a heartfelt plea from the Conference Secretary.

There is no letter from our new Chaplain for this edition as he is currently away leading a retreat on the beautiful island of Iona. I'm sure he'll have some thoughts and maybe photos to share in the next edition and when we catch up in August in Malvern.

As my term of office is up after this edition and the post is up for election I'd simply like to say "thank you" to everyone who has made this job so enjoyable over the last almost five

years, through COVID and out the other side to the current re-establishing of normality. It has been an enormous privilege to share your stories and journeys - and I hope to hear of many more in future editions.

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.



FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



One of the key aspects of being part of the Guild of Vergers is the fellowship. Getting together to share time, worshipping together, having a drink or a meal. Each year we often have two Festivals, one held in the York Province and the other in the Canterbury Province. We have been blessed that local branches have hosted these festivals each year which has given our members the opportunity to see our churches and cathedrals by organising tours and services on our behalf.

More recently, 'Festival Lites' were introduced, to have more of a social twist on the day, without robing and focusing on the fellowship and less formal approach. These events took the pressure of hosting branches and enables anyone to promote their favourite area. The first one was a short day trip from Berwick on Tweed to Alnwick, and exploring the Northumberland coastline. Over the past year, a return visit to St Edmundsbury Cathedral and Sheffield Cathedral have proven to be enjoyable. In September we will be visiting Croydon Minster, hosted by the local branch, a jewel in the Southwark diocese.

As the summer months get underway, we as a Guild start to focus on our Annual Training Conference and Retreat. Again, we will be enjoying the delights of the Elim Conference Centre in West Malvern, surrounded by the rolling Malvern Hills. If you have never attended the conference, I strongly urge you to come and join in the fellowship of fellow vergers and also to enjoy the superb views, which assist us to unwind. It is important to take time out from our hectic schedules to marvel at the views alone in this area of England. This year, we have an exciting programme of speakers who will guide us through the use of prayer in our lives.

All these events do not happen by happy accident. I am grateful to those who work behind the scenes to ensure that members of the Guild enjoy their time of fellowship together in organising events, tours and enable us to take time out of our busy working lives to come together. There are still plenty of spaces in the forthcoming events and booking forms are readily available.

If anyone has an idea of a place to visit, or can offer their church or cathedral as a focal point for a festival, do let one of the Executive Group know. We have spaces in 2024 onwards for us to travel the country and explore.

John Kirby-Shearer
Chairman



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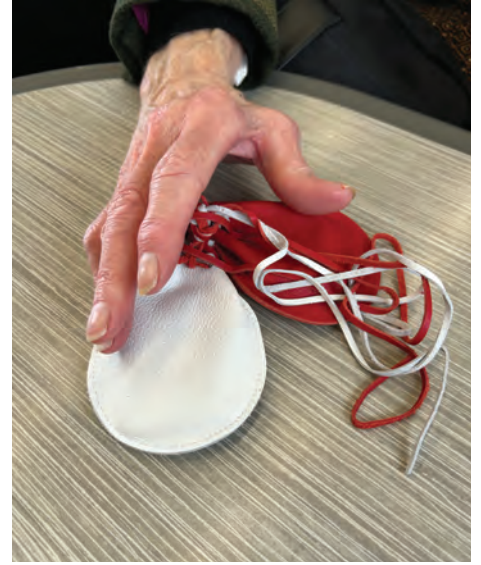
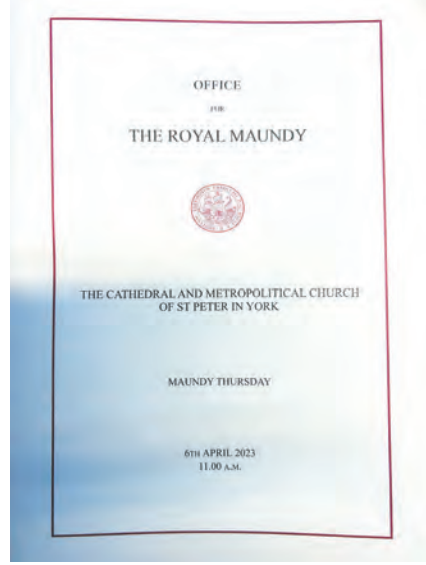
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MAUNDY MONEY FOR IRENE



Irene and I left for York on the Wednesday of Holy Week, the day before the Royal Maundy Ceremony. As we approached York on the train, the heavens opened and it actually didn't stop raining until the Thursday afternoon as we were preparing to leave. We located our hotel, a slightly plusher one than we would normally stay in and on inspection there was a small box on the dressing table which contained two white corsages with a note from my husband Melvyn wishing us a wonderful time. After unpacking, and despite the rain, we decided to go and explore and to work out our route, to the Minster, for the morning as timings would be tight. We had been asked to be seated by 8.45am for an 11.00am service!

Surprise, surprise, we got lost, but had fun doing so. Neither Irene nor I have any real sense of direction outside our own areas but by asking a local person we eventually found the Minster. I was a little surprised that there was no Evensong nor anything devotional for the Wednesday in Holy Week. After a very tasty handmade pizza, and better directions for the morning, we headed back to our hotel.

Guess what! We got lost! When we get lost, Irene's stock phrase to any male passer-by is 'Young Man'. The young man who came to our rescue just happened to be an off duty Police Officer from Liverpool visiting York with his wife and young daughter. He called up Google Maps and showed us the route. As we started to walk on, he returned and said he'd drop his wife and child at their hotel and then walk us back to ours!



We awoke very early on Thursday morning, breakfasted, tidied and set off. Tasked with not bringing anything, other than a small handbag, was just impossible when it's bucketing down and your best shoes are suede. So armed with my fascinator, umbrella & shoes, we set off. This time we didn't get lost but negotiated the

Minster and joined the lengthy security queue. Next was the queue to gain entry. The welcomer, noticing that Irene has a walking stick allowed us in via a different door with no queue and told us to head east to the welcome table, where the name badges and sign in sheets were. Once signed in we were shown to our allocated seats on the south side of the Minster. Recipients sat in the front row, companions just behind. Each seat was named and had an Orders of Service on it! The vergers had obviously been hard at work early that morning to get this all set up. We were told that, should we need them, the toilets would close at 10.15am. As the seats began to fill up, there was a chatty air of expectancy.

As is ever in this small world, Odette Penwarden from Southwark Cathedral, another recipient, floated by and then Chris Watson, who is branch treasurer for our particular branch of the CofE Guild of Vergers, who is also on the verger team at St James' Palace, although they are not referred to as vergers, he is called 'The Groom of the Vestry', just happened to walk past so stopped to have a quick chat, well more of a mini branch committee meeting.

Following the Minster & Ecumenical Processions the grand West Doors of the Minster opened heralding the entry of



King Charles III and Queen Camilla who joined the procession followed by the Royal Almonry Procession and then the service began. During the service the Distribution of Maundy Gifts began with distribution to the South side of the Minster. King Charles followed by the Archbishop of York, the Yeomen of the Guard carrying the Dishes containing the Alms and the Keeper of the Closet who is Martin Castledine, the Dean's Verger from Westminster Abbey processed down the main aisle where more recipients were positioned on the ends of the rows, across the cross aisle, then up along the south aisle. Each time the King shook hands with the recipient, said "thank you for all you do for your church and our community" handed the recipient two purses a red one and a white one, and moved along. The service continued and the King then repeated this process on the North side of the Minster while the choirs of York Minster & the HM's Chapel Royal Choir from St James' Palace, sang gloriously for each ceremony.

Once the service was over, the King was whisked away and despite there being several official photographers, sadly the photographers never caught the block we were seated in. We were under strict instruction not to take photos of the King which was a real shame as he was so close. I personally didn't fancy being whisked off to the tower for disobeying this rule.

After a quick cuppa, where the café owner took our picture for his Instagram page, then back to the hotel to collect our luggage and off to the station to start the journey home. Both Irene and I had Maundy Thursday services to get back to.

I can't thank Irene enough for choosing me to be her companion. For her friendship and the fact that we never stopped talking from the moment we met at King's Cross until the moment we parted at King's Cross. For Melvyn for encouraging me to go. For both our Vicars who trusted us enough to be back in time to serve our own churches on Maundy Thursday. For the girls' choir matrons who covered for me. This will truly be a time I will never forget.

Denise Mead

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



11-13 July 2023

The Rev'd Thomas Cameron has offered to lead a pilgrimage to Walsingham. Please phone him on 07984 531546 or tom.cameron2@aol.com for more details.



Monday 7 until Thursday 10 August 2023

Annual Retreat and Training Conference



Wednesday 27 September 2023

Croydon Minster has been offered by the London, Southwark Branch for a Festival. Booking form included with this magazine.

2024 onwards

No Venues offered with the exception of:



2027

The suggestion of returning to Leicester for a Festival to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the modern diocese.



2032

The 100th anniversary of the Guild. The proposal is that this might take place in York Minster as many of the previous major celebrations (75th & 80th) have taken place down South. There would be only one Festival this year and there will be both financial and logistical work from the National Guild.

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

THE JOURNEY

It's Friday morning 8:45am and I'm headed out to swim at Loch of the Lowes. Spring is in the air - it's 18C, and the water temperature is likely to be 12-13C. There are low clouds on the hills but the sun is breaking through as I look out of on the kitchen window while I'm filling my flask with fresh coffee and hunting for a snack to have when I get out of the water. I'm meeting Clare and the Mental Health Swims group in the carpark and we'll all go in together after greeting each other and finding out what we've been up to since the last swim. After our dip there'll be more "blether" and if we're lucky Clare will have baked some of her amazing chocolate brownies for us to share.

Later today I'm meeting up with the town's "Walk It" group for a few miles sociable walk around Selkirk - the route is decided by our leader once he knows who's going today and their walking ability. Sometimes it's a wander around the Haining (Selkirk's local stately home grounds and Loch), sometimes down into the valley and along the river... but always there's conversation, catching with each other to compare notes on the weekend or who's got what planned for the rest of the week.

It seems a lifetime away from the first exploratory walks I did, alone and scared, trying to get my head around living in a new country, job, friends, family and home

all left behind. I'm glad to say that this is now my home - I've found my place and new friends in this beautiful part of the world. It's been quite a journey.

I started walking with a friend back in Horsham - we explored St Leonard's Forest and some other places on the High Weald - then during the first COVID lockdown I started to explore a little more on my own. I can honestly say that extended "health/exercise walks" and getting out into nature was the activity that helped most with the depression I began to feel when locked out of the church where I had served for 8 years. The Wey & Arun Canal at Alfold was one of my "go to" spots and I was particularly fascinated by the strings of tadpoles in the pond at the end of the stretch I walked that spring.

Once my redundancy had been confirmed and it had been agreed that emotionally I would not be able to serve my notice period and needed time instead to adjust mentally to my situation, my husband and I started looking for our relocation destination. We had already decided that the Scottish Borders would be a good place for retirement, so it was just a case of settling on which Borders town would be the best fit - Selkirk very quickly became our favourite. It's a typical market town, very much like Horsham albeit on a smaller scale. The two biggest bonuses

have been my getting a job in the local Co-Op, meaning I'm back to being a member of the town community, getting to know many of the townsfolk and making lots of connections; and being on the fringes of the Southern Uplands meaning there are simply endless stunningly beautiful places to walk and explore.

Any of you who know me well will know just how "broken" I was mentally by the whole situation and that it has taken most of the last two and a half years for me to really settle and feel that this is now my home. We moved to Galashiels initially (into a rented house whilst we looked for a permanent home) and I started to explore... The first of my walks were around the town to get to know the layout and landmarks, discovering the Gala Policies (grounds of a long-demolished estate of the Laird of Gala on the southern fringes of the town), then later in the winter I joined an organised walk around the Gala Hills - there I got the hill bug, seeing the town from that elevated perspective started the drive to climb and see where I was now living.

I walked along cycle paths, parts of the Southern Upland Way and riverside paths... I drove over to the coast and explored North Berwick (without realising I was breaking the "stay in your county" rule at the time), and then the stunning clifftop paths around the nature reserve



Wey & Arun canal



My first view of the Selkirk hills



Selkirk Market Square



The view from the edge of the Policies



Walking down into Gala



Yair cycle path



Southern Upland Way



Melrose riverside path



North Berwick



St Abbs



Three Brethren



My first open water swim



Borders Abbeys Way near Selkirk



The Glen estate from SUW



Glen Lednock, Crieff



Stichill Lyn



Falls of Glen Turret



My favourite pool



River Tweed, Peebles

at St Abbs Head which IS in the Borders. I discovered the Tweed Valley - Innerleithen and Peebles with their riverside walkways - and the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys including walking to the Three Brethren (a local landmark) around St Mary's Loch and having my first open water swim at the adjacent, smaller Loch of the Lowes in May 2021.

The second organised walk I did, on Midsummer's morning June 21st 2021 was supposed to be to watch the dawn from the Eildons... unfortunately the morning was overcast so no dramatic sunrise was evident - but I made a particular friend (Zoe) that morning who then encouraged me to walk and swim as she showed me around her favourite places. We walked and swam all summer and into the winter, covering the eastern half of the Southern Uplands Way, sections of the Borders Abbeys Way, The Glen estate and many spectacular swimming locations. When she moved to the Grampians for work I was worried that we would lose touch, but happily that has not been the case and we have walked and swum in places she has discovered in her new locale.

The Co-op and various local Borders Facebook groups have yielded new

swimming and walking friends and I also continue to explore on my own, often praying, crying or singing as I walk, but nowadays with far more confidence and feeling more secure in the knowledge that I can read my map, navigate and know my physical limits and how to stay safe. My biggest solo achievement so far has been completing St Cuthbert's Way at Easter (69 miles from Melrose to Lindisfarne), walked in sections over 6 weeks and including the obligatory barefoot walk over the sands to the island.

My swimming escapades have also continued, nowadays mostly with Suzane and her dog, Lucky, and I managed to swim through the last winter with friends and groups. Every swim is different, but the one constant is that cold water swimming always leaves you with a rush of "feel good" hormones - a natural buzz that, for me, lasts for the rest of the day. One of my favourite locations is "Dookits" on the Tweed at Peebles where the large rock on the bank provides a calm pool in the river. When I dipped there in December the air temperature was -13C and the water temperature +0.9C. There was ice inside my costume when I got changed and by the time we were dried and dressed our swimming things had

frozen to the ground. It left me feeling invincible and exhilarated all day (yes, I know I'm bonkers!). Summer of 2022's highlight was swimming at the huge Megget reservoir (some 400m up in the hills), when the water temperature was 24C and the air temperature as the sun set fell to 22C... warmer in the water than out on banks... And then there were the waterfalls - Stichill here in the Borders and Glenturret in Perthshire - simply amazing places.

Through my walking and swimming my depression has thankfully lifted and although I still have moments when I mourn the passing of my time as a verger, I have made peace with the move to Scotland and I know the healing power of my new surroundings. I am sure that I am where I am meant to be and although I don't yet fully understand why I'm here, I know that all will become clear in God's own time. I'll just carry on working, walking and "dooking" - and now the swallows are back, enjoy the privilege of floating in the middle of my favourite pool and watching them soaring and swooping, catching the flies from the surface of the water...

Jane Gorrie
Media Officer

EBORFEST 2023 – THE VENUE HOST’S VIEW

This festival had been a long time in planning but the day for the plans to come to fruition seemed a long way off. As is the case with anything these days, the days, weeks and months sped their merry way until the day of Tuesday 16th May appeared on all our calendars.

As the longest serving Guild member at Sheffield Cathedral (although not the only one working there, thankfully) it was down to me to plan the day from the cathedral's point of view: what would the structure of the day be? How many different tours would be offered? Would there be a goody bag or some other perk? With the support of not only the York Branch, who organised the bookings, but also the cathedral staff, who gave their input into what they would offer for the day, a plan came together.

A number of Guild members had signed up for the day (a total of 24 after the final deadline for bookings passed). Of those that turned up 5 were members of the host branch. The visitors arrived and, after registration and the first set of refreshments in the Cathedral's Chapter House, (where both sets of refreshments were served and the vergers later robed for Evensong), the day could begin.

As Cathedral liaison for the day I began by welcoming those attending to the Cathedral before handing over to the Dean, the Very Reverend Abi Thompson, who gave a welcome on behalf of the Dean and Chapter. Then it was time for the two tours: one general one and one Verger special designed by yours truly.

The Verger special was jointly led by myself and one of the Cathedral guides and incorporated a brief history of the building; its rôle in the Guild's foundation (Head Verger Stephen Pentecost (1920–1961) had been one of the founding members); a look at some of the embroidery (mainly for Dee Caulton-Ball's benefit); a visit to the Crypt Chapel (the only one of its kind in an English Cathedral where ashes are buried) to see the final resting place of Stephen Pentecost and also Alan Cottam (late Fellow of the Guild), a trip into the Sacristy to see the various verges and maces, including the Stephen Pentecost Mace and the Northern Province Guild Verge (which is Guild property); a Communion set based on the former Tinsley Towers, and finally to the staff corridor to see the Vergers' window.

The Eucharist followed at 12.30, celebrated by the Canon Precentor, the Reverend Canon Geoffrey Harbord. I served and read the lesson before the 30 strong congregation which also included three priests being interviewed for the cathedral's Canon Missioner vacancy. The prayers included prayers for sick Guild members and ended with the Vergers' prayer. An informal group photo was taken after the service

After lunch and free time to explore the city (or do some work in my case!), where those attending could also view the Charles Farris stand, the Guild Shop, or take advantage of the 10% discount in the Cathedral's coffee shop and Gift shop, the second round of refreshments were served at 4.30 in the lead up to Evensong

at 5.45. For Evensong I verged the choir using the Northern Province verge (see attached photo of me holding the verge, taken by me after Evensong), and our newest branch member, Alistair Dean (transferred from London, Southwark and Chelmsford branch) carried the Guild's millennium verge before the vergers who robed for the service. The Officiant was the Reverend Matt Wood, who is spending the last few months of his curacy period at the cathedral. Again, the Vergers' prayer was used during the intercessions.

The official group photo was taken after the service.

All in all the day was a success, and the feedback I have had from those attending and from cathedral staff has been amazing. I would like to thank Paul Briers of Charles Farris for setting up the Charles Farris stand, to Su Graves and Alan Gardner of the York Branch for handling the bookings, to Stephen Stokes for bringing the Guild Shop, to Emma Gittins (Cathedral Events and Operations Manager) for making sure the refreshments were ready despite having two other groups to provide refreshments for, to all those who came to the festival, and for the rest of the Cathedral staff team whether their rôle was great or small. It will definitely rank as one of the greatest highlights of my career.



Ben Elliott-Hill
Deputy Regional Representative – North
Liturgical Verger – Sheffield Cathedral York Branch

Guild of Vergers • Visit to Walsingham • July 11th-13th

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Bookings can now be made for this directly with the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham (walsinghamanglican.org.uk), or telephone **01328 824202** (stating that you are with the Guild of Vergers)

Please also let Fr Tom know that you are coming (**07984 531546**).

SHEFFIELD FESTIVAL REPORT FROM LONDON, SOUTHWARK & CHELMSFORD BRANCH

On Tuesday 16th May, a lovely sunny morning, a small but enthusiastic group of Vergers from around the country arrived in Sheffield Cathedral for the Ebor Guild Festival.

The day started with everyone gathering for coffee in the Chapter House which is below the Cathedral. Here was a chance for everyone to chat before the day began. Following coffee we all proceeded upstairs to the cathedral floor for a welcome by the Dean of Sheffield the Very Reverend Abi Thompson, followed by a welcome from one of the Cathedral's Vergers, Ben Elliott Hill who is the Cathedral's liturgical verger. Ben organised us into two tour groups and told us the agenda for the day. There were two tours on offer 1) the vergers tour & 2) the cathedral grand tour.

We were introduced to our guides and I went on the Cathedral Tour. We were informed that the cathedral was formally a Parish Church in the city and was finally granted Cathedral status in 1914. However the history of Christianity in that place dates back well over 1000 years. We were shown around the several chapel's including the Chapels of the Holy Spirit, Shrewsbury and St George's Chapels.

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit was inspired by the Lady Chapel in Llandaff Cathedral which is apparently 700 years old and was part of the 1830s extension and planned to be the Lady Chapel of the reoriented Cathedral. The window in the Chapel is dedicated to the great Te Deum stained glass window by the artist Christopher Webb. At the top of the window is a dove and in the centre Christ in Glory surrounded by prophets, martyrs, the good and faithful. The vaulted ceiling is carved with roses, lilies, vines and sunflower



motifs. The wooden stalls and canopies over them were designed by Ninian Comper. Below the window is the altar and behind it a beautiful reredos screen which was given by the Freemasons of the City after the First World War, in memory of those who gave their lives for their country.

The Shrewsbury Chapel was added to the then Parish Church around 1520 by the Lord of the Manor, George Talbot of Sheffield, who was the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury. This was built as a family chapel with a family vault below. The monument to the left of the chapel is of George Talbot the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury who died in 1538.

We also visited the St Georges' Chapel where we were informed that this chapel was originally planned to be the new sanctuary of the bigger and reoriented cathedral as planned by artist George Nicholson. The Chapel is the Chapel for the York and Lancaster Regiments which were founded in 1758 and disbanded in 1968.

We visited the crypt chapel dedicated to All Saints' which is underneath the St George's Chapel and is constructed so that the arches and vaulted ceiling make

the glorious music of Choral Evensong's, a truly wonderful sound.

After our tours we headed to the High Altar for a short service of Holy Communion presided at by the Reverend Canon Geoffrey Harbord, the Canon Precentor of the Cathedral. This was followed by lunch in a restaurant or cafe of our own choice.

During the afternoon, tea, coffee and biscuits were served in the Chapter House where we also robed for Choral Evensong and then processed into the Cathedral nave. Choral Evensong was sung by the Sheffield Cathedral choir and evensong ended with a voluntary suitable for this coronation-tide.

After Evensong we gathered for the traditional Guild photo on the steps of the High Altar. The it was time for a fond farewell, before heading back to our own areas of the country.

Thank you Ben and the Chapter of Sheffield Cathedral for making us so welcome.

Oliver Harcus
(Branch correspondent for London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch)

DEAR BRANCH MEMBERS



So far, as Conference Secretary, I have only received 32 completed booking forms for this year's Annual Training Conference & Retreat in West Malvern in August. I personally feel that, at this stage, this number is a little low so please accept this as a friendly reminder that completed Booking Forms for conference really need to be with me by Friday 23rd June accompanied by, at least a deposit of £50.00, if not, the whole payment at this stage.

Shortly after this date we will need to let the Conference Centre know our requirements.

It will be really good to welcome our 'first time' attendees however it would be even better to be able to welcome you all, that is those of you who have not already booked. If you've never been to conference, please do consider coming along. You will not be disappointed.

If you are new/newish and have not yet been admitted into the Guild, conference is a great opportunity to be admitted.

Kind regards

Denise Mead
CEGV Conference Secretary
CEGVConference@gmail.com
www.cofegv.org.uk



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:

- Media Officer, this role is becoming vacant in August. The role of the Media Officer is to oversee the publication of the Magazine and to keep the online presence of the Guild, both the website and Facebook, up to date. This is a three-year appointment.
- Training Administrator, this Officer works with the Training Officer and is a prime point of contact for Candidates

who are on or looking to embark on the Diploma, this is a three-year appointment. – Sue Ansell has offered to stand again for this role.

- 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. This role is currently vacant.

For further information and job descriptions, please contact the General Secretary, CEGVGenSec@gmail.com. A completed, and correct, Nomination Form must be received ASAP.

THE DIPLOMA COURSE

The Executive Committee of the Guild, at the recommendation of General Synod, formulated a course to cover the work and ministry of the Verger. The course is formulated in four units set in two stages:

The first stage is the **Foundation** Unit, which comprises sixteen assignments, covering preparation for worship, care of the building, record-keeping, and archives, care of the churchyard, and caring for the people of God.

The second stage comprises of the other three units:

- The Verger as **Pastor** covers the individual's personal development, their relationship with the people and God, care for others, and for Church resources.
- The Verger as **Historian** covers the history of church building, architecture, and the history of worship, including the Book of Common Prayer, and the Bible.

- The Verger as **Administrator** covers communication, forms and registers, and the structures of the Church.

Students who engage with the full four units are expected to attend at least one full CEGV Annual Training Conference prior to completion.

Those who complete the course successfully receive a diploma, an academic hood, and the right to use the post-nominal letters '**Dip GV**'.

If you are interested in learning more about the Course, please contact:

the **Training Registrar:**

Susan Ansell CEGVTrainReg@gmail.com

or the **Training Officer:**

Les Mitchelmore CEGVTrainOff@gmail.com.



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EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

On Monday 6th March the East Anglia Branch met at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral for their AGM. Prior to the meeting we gathered in the Edmund Chapel for a short service where I had the great pleasure to admit Alan O'Connor to the Guild as a full member. The photograph shows Canon Alan Forsdike (Branch Chaplain), Pam Cobb, Alan O'Connor and Paul Collard (Branch Treasurer).



We then adjourned to the Edmund Room for our meeting. After 30 years in the role, Ian Cobb retired as Branch Chairman and I retired as Branch Secretary, after 27 years. At the meeting it was proposed and agreed by those there that I be made an Honorary Branch Life Member. Ian and I were presented with a monetary gift from our branch members and we decided to put it towards a holiday later this year. Thanks go to all our branch members for their support over the years.

Thank you to Callum Brittain who has become our new Branch Secretary and to Stephen Stokes who agreed to be our Branch Chairman (for the coming year). Thanks also must be given to Paul Collard who continues to be the Branch Treasurer and to Canon Alan Forsdike and Rev Catherine Forsdike who continue in the roles of our Branch Chaplains.

Ian and I will continue as full members of the Guild and to support the Guild as much as possible in the future.

Pam Cobb

YORK BRANCH

At Christmas we visited Hull Minster and had our lunch in their newly built restaurant. The Minster revamp projects are now complete and it is defiantly worth a visit with some stunning blending of modern glass and steel to the original building. We also celebrated Dave Alum's retirement as Virger.

In spring we were invited by the Canon Precentor of Ripon Cathedral, Michael

to hold our AGM and shared Eucharist in the small Chapel under the Chapter House. Gail and her support team looked after us very well and some of the volunteers baked for us and provided us with lunch. A great way to mix business with pleasure. Ripon is also worth a visit they have some amazing carved misericords in the choir stalls and a very ancient crypt. It is situated in the lovely town centre with lots to see and do.

Having arranged the Eborfest at Sheffield Cathedral our next gathering in July will be more informal.

**Su Graves
Chairperson**



YORK BRANCH – EBORFEST SEMI LIGHT. TUES 16TH MAY 2023

After an informal gathering where we met old and new friends, Abigail the Dean of Sheffield welcomed us all to the Cathedral of St. Peter & St Paul, after which we all went off to tour the Cathedral.

The ancient and modern glass in the entrance to the building, the carved wooden figures around the pulpit and the hidden stone sculpture of Mary are all stunning.

We met at 12:30 to take Holy Communion which was led by the Reverend Canon Geoffrey Harbord who prayed for us as Virgers and for the Guild, and also for those Virgers who couldn't be with us.

Following the service we posed for an informal photograph. There were Virgers and Chaplains from all round the country including; Liverpool, Manchester, Carlisle, Newcastle,

London and Chelmsford, St Albans, Hull, Leeds and York.

After some free time to wander in Sheffield and have lunch the day ended with Choral Evensong led by the Dean, and the official Guild photograph.

Thank you to all who travelled to Sheffield and made the day truly

delightful. Thanks also to the Cathedral volunteers who were very friendly and were on hand all day to offer information about different aspects of the church. Thank you to Ben, the Liturgical Virger at Sheffield, who welcomed and looked after us all.

Su Graves
Chairperson



LEICESTER, PETERBROUGH WITH DERBY BRANCH – A MEETING WITH A DIFFERENCE

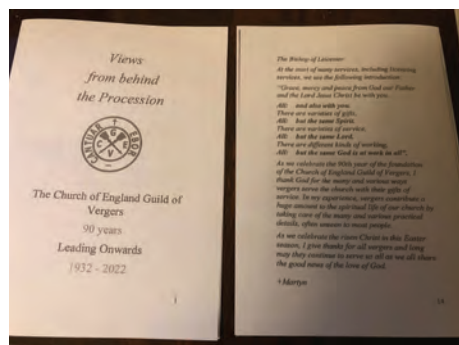
Following on from the 2022 CEGV Festival at Worcester Cathedral, Kath and Clive Mobbs and I were all very taken with the booklet "A view from the Procession" which Dee Caulton-Ball had written to mark the 90th anniversary of the Guild. It had been sent with a letter to the Archbishops and numerous Diocesan Bishops and given to all the Festival delegates. The Bishop of Leicester +Martyn Snow gave us an idea for a meeting with a difference, so on my return I asked if it would be possible to hold a branch meeting in his private Chapel at Bishop's Lodge. Through our Diocesan News Letter we invited those who act as Vergers in their Parish Churches at Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals to join with our regular members for a communion service and reception in April of this year.

We thought this would also be a great opportunity to recruit new members to the branch, and we look forward to some of those attendees joining our branch in the future.

It was a very successful and encouraging evening with relaxed atmosphere all round, and including useful and positive conversations with the Bishop.

Wouldn't it be good if all our branches met with their Diocesan Bishops... The strength of our Guild is the fellowship we share within our branches and taking that further step in attending our Provincial Festivals and The Annual Malvern Conference.

Les Mitchelmore
Chair



OXFORD BRANCH – QUIET DAY : 25TH APRIL 2023 AT DOUAI ABBEY

The first of this year's two gatherings took place a month or so later than normal but this gave us the opportunity to enjoy the many wonders of a beautiful spring day. As usual, on arrival members and friends of the Oxford Branch met in the Refectory for welcome refreshments before we moved to the room which was to be our base for the rest of the day. Proceedings commenced with a two-way dialogue entitled 'Healing the Pain', taken from a set of Meditation Cards and read by Heather Searle and Michael Golby. Our Branch Chaplain, the Revd. Marie Jackson, led us in prayer before we moved on to the Chapel in the Abbey grounds.

We were very pleased to welcome Canon Maureen Palmer who was able to join us for the day and she was going to lead us on the journey of the Stations of the Cross which adorned the walls of the Chapel. Canon Maureen also provided us with a leaflet to accompany her talk which we found very helpful. Although I was aware of the Stations of the Cross, I

had not appreciated the deep suffering of Christ on His way to the cross - shown in these carvings and we are indebted to Canon Maureen for making us so much more aware of them.

After the talk, we walked to the magnificent Oratory of Douai Abbey to join with the Brothers in their noonday service which was followed by a tasty lunch back in the Refectory. A short Management Team meeting was held before the start of the afternoon session when we met again in St Mary's Chapel for a service of Holy Communion led by the Revd. Marie Jackson.

To complete the day, we again adjourned to the Refectory for a cup of tea and a slice of homemade cake before saying our farewells and giving thanks for a day that was perfect in so many ways.

Molly Payne
Vice Chairman & Branch Correspondent



ST ALBANS BRANCH

St Alban's branch held their Corporate Communion on 10th May 2023 at St Saviour's church in St Albans. During the service we were pleased to admit two new members to the branch, Jackie Rudom from the parish of All Saints, Leighton Buzzard and Lynn Jones from St Albans Abbey. They can be seen pictured here with the branch chairperson, Mrs Lindsay Bevis on the far left, and the branch chaplain Rev Andrew Ferrars on the far right.

Jenny Huskisson
Secretary





Executive Round up

In March the Executive Committee met in person at the London Diocesan House – it is the hope that we are able to hold these meetings in differing venues so that we are able to experience the hospitality of different dioceses and that we all have varied levels of travel sometimes they may be closer and therefore fair to all. On the very long agenda, we discussed many aspects of the management of the Guild. It was felt that it would be a good idea to impart some of this information to you all



As a Guild, we are always striving to look towards the future, and try to ensure that our documentation is reactive and encompasses the needs of the Guild. We therefore have a need to adjust our Statutes again in two areas (remember the current Constitution and Statutes are available of the Guild Website).

- We have clarified who and what categories of members are able to qualify for Full and for Associate Membership (Section 6, Statutes March 2023)
- We have formalised what happens to Branch Life Members when a Branch closes (Section 9.5, Statutes March 2023).

A motion from a Branch has been before both the Executive and Standing Committees to look at how we acknowledge National Life Members. The recommendation from the Branch that, in line with what is given to Fellows, we gave them a Membership Badge that would distinguish National Life Members. This would mean that when engaging with a person we would be able to, at a glance, identify those members who have been recognised for their contribution to the Guild as a whole. The design that was adopted (see the picture) is with a Blue centre and a Brass outer ring, no longer will we give Glassware which had gotten damaged in transit or owing to a mishap been damaged in homes.

One of the other topics of discussion, again following a Branch request, was the location of the Conference Venue. As it was felt that for some the distance was too great – we did note that some UK members do travel from Truro (some 173 miles as the crow flies). So, again, members of Executive have looked into different venues that can accommodate our members. We have looked at two

alternative venues, one in London and one in Lincoln with Elim costing about £363 (M-Th), Lincoln costing £500 and London costing £624. There was a discussion held on this matter and it was viewed that, with the cost implication that would stop people from attending during this current cost of living crisis, we would stay at Elim for 2024. We are always looking for new venues, and if you have one that we should look at please let us know.

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.

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch

Ann Woodward

Durham & Newcastle with Carlisle Branch

Jimmy and Margaret Guy

East Anglia Branch

Val Pizzey

Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester Branch

Margaret Burston, Paul & family

Leicester & Peterborough with Derby branch

Pauline Haynes; Lance Bloom; David Edwards; Ann Anderson

Oxford Branch

Audrey Ashby, Michael Golby Heather Ringrose

Salisbury Branch

David Hall

Somerset & Avon Branch

Marek Barden, Mary Holway, Roger Lawrence, Trevor Llewellyn

York Branch

George Cook, Ken Hara; Ted Lemons

RIP

Frank Woodward

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch

Maurice John Sheffield

Winchester Branch

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.



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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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