

# THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Autumn 2023 | Issue 320



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



# From the Editors Tray

In this conference edition of the Virger, you will find a collage of pictures that will give a flavour of this year's conference at West Malvern. I hope this will tempt many of you to take advantage of the early booking for next year.

I would like to pay tribute to Jane Gorrie, the Media Officer for the past four years, for all the work she undertook in developing the magazine. Messages of thanks and best wishes have been emailed from branches all over the country.

Articles and photographs for future editions can still be sent to [cegvmedia@gmail.com](mailto:cegvmedia@gmail.com) which will be temporarily looked after by the General Secretary and myself.

The closing date for the next magazine will be 10th November 2023.

**John Kirby-Shearer**  
National Chairman



Cover Photo: 5 intrepid explorers - Vergers having scaled the top of the Malvern Hills while at the Annual Training Conference and Retreat.



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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# Chaplains letter

Dear Sisters and Brothers

I am writing this letter only a few days after my return from this year's national training conference and retreat and I am still buzzing with all that I experienced during those wonderful few days. Like several other attendees this was my first conference, and I was unsure of what to expect but it turned out to be a delight. Great fun, great company, and great worship...and the food was not bad either! If you have never attended a conference and are pondering whether to do so I would warmly encourage you to. It is an excellent opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills, and enjoy the beautiful countryside of the Malvern hills. What more could you want?

One of the main takeaways from the conference for me was that we have a future as a Guild that is bright and full of potential. Many of us are rightly concerned about the future direction of the Guild especially given falling numbers and some branches struggling to continue but it was clear from the conference that there is a cohort of younger, intelligent (mostly!), and very motivated vergers coming up who want the Guild to flourish and are prepared to help out. Set them alongside the wise and experienced more senior members and anything is possible! It would be lovely to see even more younger vergers next year at conference so if you know of anyone in that category, please do encourage them to come and assure them that they will meet like-minded colleagues.



It would also be great to see more of our more experienced vergers joining us for conference. As I said above, do please think about attending next year. You will be assured of a very warm welcome. To make it even more attractive we do have a number of bursary opportunities available. These are open to all UK vergers who want some assistance. Our Bishops are very generous each year in donating towards a Bursary fund that we want to use! In addition, each first-time attendee will also get a discounted first-time price! Please also be assured that the application process is confidential.

I would also want to record some thank yous here. This is always a fraught exercise lest offence is caused by an unintended slip, but I do need to thank all those who helped organise the conference and who looked after me (and my son Ben) with such care and love. I am deeply grateful. The National Chairman, John, led us through the four days with skill and humour and to me and his colleagues I say thank you. The verging was of a very high standard and clearly for some this was the first-time verging in such an environment and thank you to those who took such care with the rehearsals and training and well done to those who tried something new at conference.



Now back to reality! I hope you all get a chance to have a well-earned rest over the summer period and return to your parishes, cathedrals, and chapels refreshed and enthused... and to your branches. Please remember if you have a celebration or occasion at which you think my presence might be an asset (!) then please do contact me giving as much advance warning as possible. I will do my very best to make myself available. Until then every blessing to you all.

Yours in Christ  
**Fr David**  
**National Chaplain**

# From the desk of the National Chairman



Our annual training conference and retreat is one of the highlights of our calendar and this year it did not disappoint. It was my pleasure to greet some members who were visiting for the first time, one celebrating his 21st birthday, four members from across the pond and those who enjoy coming for their annual pilgrimage to the beautiful Malvern Hills. This year I had the pleasure of installing our new National Chaplain, award a Guild Fellowship and a National Life member along with Foundation Unit certificates and full Diplomas. The work continues to go on in supporting our members across the country both in prayer and fellowship.

The officers of the Guild are acutely mindful of the rising costs that we all face today and due to generous bequests and donations from our Bishops, we can offer bursaries to enable all those who wish to attend our annual conference, to ease the financial burden. We have looked at holding this event in other venues, but after a looking in depth at three other venues

costings and facilities, the Elim Conference Centre offered good value for money in a wonderful location. We are delighted that we can use the adjoining church for our worship sessions. During our stay, we assist the local community in supporting the local pub, which is now run as a community venture. Work has already started in preparing for next year.

As we approach the end of the summer period, I hope that you have all managed to have a break from work and enjoy time away from your churches and cathedrals to recharge yourselves for the term ahead. It is important to have time away from the workplace and seek rest and recuperation.

I am ever mindful that the Guild needs to modernise and keep up with today's changing church, we need to be attractive to younger members, support our older members and basically move with the times. Over the past few years, you will have noticed some changes that have already taken place such as the magazine being sent out centrally from the printer, meetings held via zoom and communications sent out electronically. Our payments can be done via bank transfers. Ten years ago, we were very reluctant to embrace these changes. A working group has been set up to look at other ways we can strengthen the Guild and ensure that we are in a good place for our centenary celebrations in 2032. If any members have any suggestions, please to not hesitate to email them to me.

In your prayers, please remember work colleagues, friends, vergers past and present and uphold them in their many roles and positions. The Guild is here to support through fellowship and training, so please support this work.

**John Kirby-Shearer**

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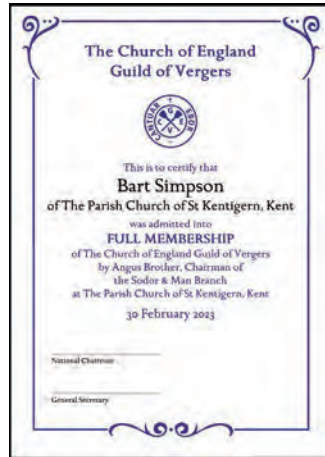
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Established by Joyce Davison & Maureen Waterston in 1980

# Executive Round up

In August the Executive Committee met on the Sunday prior to the Annual Training Conference and Retreat – The main area of discussion was on a new Working Group, this will be formed of Vergers, Fellows, Officers and some outside personnel. The main remit of the Group was to look at the Guild as it is, and look towards the future. We are acutely aware of the demographic of our members with the Branches being vast in terms of Geography but with a demographic, this is unable to travel as much as they would like. The Group will be also looking at how we as a Guild will progress and surpass our Centenary (in 2032) as many organisations are struggling with recruitment we are not alone and we have a thirst and a want to move forward. The Group will meet to discuss and thrash out ideas and present to the Executive Committee its findings. Should you have any ideas on how to safeguard the longevity of the Guild please advise the National Chairman, John, so that he can input these into the Group ([CEGVNatChair@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVNatChair@gmail.com)).



One of the last points of Business which was discussed was the production of Certificates, it was agreed that this should not sit in the Media Officers role but would be better suited as a role fulfilled by the General Secretary, so should you need any certificates, please contact the General Secretary, Stephen, at [CEGVGenSec@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVGenSec@gmail.com) who would no produce these.

Forthcoming Festivals was discussed as following the Festival in Croydon in September no other venues have been offered for 2024 or 2025.

A reminder was given of the Elections due for the next year:

#### National Chairman

3-year term of Office  
(this is the end of his second concurrent term)

#### General Secretary

5-year term of Office

#### Training Officer

3-year term of Office

#### Overseas Membership Officer

3-year term of Office

With no one stepping forward to fill the vacated role of Media Officer, both the National Chairman and General Secretary will temporarily fill this important role. It was agreed that with Social Media now being an easier way of communicating with some members, along with the website, that the Executive Committee would co-opt some of our younger members to assist with the digital aspect of the Guild, overseen by the Chairman and Secretary.

## 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**.

#### Blackburn Branch

Anne Woodward, Freda Murphy

#### Chichester Branch

Sue Ansell, Rosemary Durward

#### Oxford Branch

Michael & Betty Golby, Audrey Ashby, Heather Ringrose, Molly Payne

#### Somerset & Avon Branch

Marek Barden, Mary Holway, Roger Lawrence, Trevor Lleyellyn, Chris Eyon

#### St Albans Branch

Jackie Rudom  
Brian Willett

#### York Branch

George Cook

## RIP

Ernest Nicholas Kröhn  
May 2023 Bournemouth Branch

June Folwell 2 June 2023. Funeral will be held at St Botolph's Boston Stump on Monday 4th. September at 11-45am

Geoff Carpenter - Bournemouth Branch, who passed away in June 2023

**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.**

# Conference Bursaries

**A**s we give thanks for another successful Annual Training Conference and Retreat, the booking forms are already being distributed for August 2024. Our venue in the Malvern Hills continues to give us a very good deal for high quality board and lodging at a low price, amidst spectacular scenery, but a four-day residential meeting is unavoidably costly. We know this cost can be a barrier discouraging some from attending Conference.

The good news is that generous donations from diocesan bishops and legacies from Guild members

mean we have ample bursary funds available with which to offer substantial discounts from the conference fee for any (non-overseas) member who would otherwise have difficulty attending. And we would like many more members to take advantage of this. These bursaries are not solely for those in exceptionally dire straits – anyone living on a typical vergers' salary and paying their own conference fee would be eligible for a bursary if requested!

We have agreed that any delegate booking to attend Conference for the first time next year will automatically be considered for a £100 bursary

(larger discounts can be available in case of need) - perhaps this might be the nudge you need to encourage you to attend? This arrangement should also assist those obliged to attend the Conference as part of the requirements of the Guild's Diploma. But no one who has attended our Conference before should feel disadvantaged: all members can contact the National Chaplain, in confidence, to apply for a bursary, either before or after submitting their Conference booking form.

**Robert Beattie**  
**National Treasurer**

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## First Time attending Conference – it will not be my last

**O**n the morning of 6 August I set off from home in Suffolk to the Malvern Hills, unsure of what to expect for the upcoming Church of England Vergers Guild conference. We arrived in the afternoon where we bumped into some familiar faces in the car park. Even though this was my first conference, I already knew a few people there, which helped put me at ease.

Both my room and the Conference Centre were stunning. I unpacked and headed down to get to know some new people. I have never met such a friendly welcoming group of people before, I instantly felt at home.

Having to head up on the Sunday so dad could attend the standing committee meant I had a good few extra hours, so I headed out on a walk with a fellow member of the East Anglia

branch. It was a lovely time to discuss our mission as vergers and to get to know each other better, it was also lovely to be outside in the countryside just walking in silence, thinking about

why we were there and what we wanted to get out of it. After dinner that night, we headed down to the local pub to have a chat and a drink to celebrate my 21st birthday.





The next day we had the welcome meeting and forum as all the delegates started to arrive. It was interesting to get to know all the delegates and it was nice to be able to introduce myself to those who did not know me. This was followed by the National Chairman inviting me to stand and receive my birthday card from everyone in the Guild (a lovely moment and a great sentiment).

That afternoon we had a variety of workshops including fabric and vestment repair and a session on the guild diploma (other workshops were also available). I attended the workshop on the guild diploma, which was led by Sue, Les and Callum Brittain, I found this to be both very informative and helpful. In fact by the end of the week I had signed up for the diploma! This will be another exciting chapter in my vergering life. This was followed by a casual chat about our funniest and strange verging stories (this got a lot of laughs!) Later that afternoon we held the opening Eucharist. What a special service this was! It was great to see everyone in their finery and gowns flowing.

On Tuesday, morning prayer was followed by a talk from The Venerable Dr David Jenkins (National Chaplain) about Celtic spirituality. Some very interesting points and discussions came around from this talk. I personally found it very interesting with a good dash of humour (which is vital).

In the afternoon, the talk was given by The Rev'd Tom Cameron, this was a talk about Mental Health, which in this day and age is an incredibly important and poignant

discussion to have. It was very interesting to hear from other Vergers about their experiences with Mental Health, so thank you for everyone who shared.

Throughout the conference I attended and was moved by many services. I think what moved me the most about the conference was the friendship and laughs we all shared. So a big thank you to all of you for making me and my dad feel so welcome.

And to those who are unsure about going, go for it! It is great!

**Ben Jenkins**  
Member of the East Anglia Branch  
& First time attendee at Conference



# Photos from Conference 2023











# A message from St James's Parish Church



**T**he Rev'd Rebecca Elliot, Vicar of St James's Parish Church, West Malvern writes... Last week, at St James' Church, in West Malvern, we were delighted to welcome back the Guild of Vergers when they used the church for their worship during their conference. The annual 'take-over' of the church, as

Stephen Stokes likes to call it, feels like having good friends to visit.

We always appreciate the invitations to join you for some of your services in St James'. To see the church full of vergers in their colourful array, with afternoon sunlight streaming through the stain-

glassed windows and incense smoke, was something to behold. It is wonderful to see the church full and being used for worship.

I'm sure the vergers always leave the church a little better than they find it; it never looks like it has just had a full week of activity. Apart from the lovely lingering smell of incense and prayers, we would hardly know you'd been! We are very grateful for the generous collection that was left for us. It was great to see the vergers out of their robes and enjoying our newly refurbished Community Pub, the Brewers. I'm sure I even saw one pulling a pint, which is sometimes one of my jobs! West Malvern is a fun and creative community, and it is great that you come to be part of it for a while.

We already have you in the diary for 2024 and 2025. We look forward to seeing you then and for St James to be filled once again with your hymns, prayers and fellowship.





**ARTICLE FOR GUILD OF VERGERS MAGAZINE.  
AUG 2023**

Charles Farris was delighted to attend the AGM and Retreat for the Guild of Vergers at Elim Conference Centre set in the stunning surroundings of the Malvern Hills. The sales team from across the UK had the opportunity to meet with many friends and familiar faces. A well organised and wonderful occasion.

At conference we launched our new and exclusive offering for members of the Guild of Vergers.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Best Wishes

Charles Farris Team.

# Meet the National Membership Officer

**M**y life in the Church started when I was a little 7 year old. A man came to my primary School and asked a group of us to sing a well-known nursery rhyme. He was actually the Director of Music at Cirencester Parish Church and I was then invited to become a chorister there in the heart of the Cotswolds for where I was just over 13 years. I was also studying Performing arts at Cirencester College.

It was during my time at Cirencester I thought 'What am I going to do later in life?' A Bus driver? Perform on Stage? A vicar?

A friend introduced me to the Vergers at Gloucester Cathedral, and I had a very happy time working behind the scenes there. It was a job where often people would turn up to a service, see it set up and then later come back to the Cathedral and it had magically disappeared! There was something quite mysterious about the job which I enjoyed. Occasionally heard but not seen was the key! Also, something quite special knowing you are looking after an ancient building for others to enjoy for years to come.

My first employment as Verger was in 2009 at Hereford Cathedral and spent 8 years furthering my career. It was during a day out on a day off in Bristol where I met John Kirby-Shearer during his time at St Mary, Redcliffe who encouraged me to join 'The Church of England Guild of Vergers' and was then admitted by Canon Maureen in the Cathedral and supported by the Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester branch.

It was at Hereford I met my wife, Louise who volunteered at the Cathedral.

We moved to Lancing, West Sussex in August 2017 to work in the magnificent



19th century mock- gothic College Chapel. The largest School Chapel in the world! The welcome we were given by the Chaplain at the time, The Rev'd Richard Harrison, Jeremy Tomlinson (Chapel Steward) & the Head Master, we knew that we would be very settled in the College community. Louise got employed by the College as Admissions database Officer a few months later. My first day was the following day after the move and was an exciting start to what life would be life on the Sussex coast after leaving the countryside of Herefordshire. I had a big responsibility to look after a well-known Sussex landmark and the beating heart of the School.

My day is varied, and no day is the same. My day would start by assisting Fr Justin at the altar. I could then be leading a tour for a coach party, helping pupils rehearse their readings for the Whole School Eucharist or on the Chapel roof, some 150ft up, clearing the gutters and admiring the incredible views (if it isn't too blowy!). I am also very lucky and

grateful to have Sue James, the term time Chapel Cleaner who always goes beyond the call of duty to assist me and the work of the Chapel and remains dedicated. Many visitors have remarked how clean the Chapel is. I often name her as an assistant Verger!

2021 was a special year for me as I (finally!) finished my Guild of Vergers diploma after several years working on it! I was and also remain very grateful for the patience of the Executive committee. I collected this at the Guild conference in Great Malvern and I wear my hood with pride during Evensongs on a Friday in term time. It was then at the 2022 conference that I was nominated and elected to the role of 'National Membership Officer' which looks after the Headquarter membership to which I am honoured to be voted in for alongside being Branch Secretary to the Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth branch.

Being a verger is very much a vocation. The varied tasks from day to day, some of which are pastoral, take time

and dedication which fills you with an enormous sense of achievement and pride. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far at Lancing College and as a Verger and know that I can continue to grow as a person and as a vocation as the years go on.

Finally, words from my two line managers.

We have been very fortunate to have enjoyed the devoted service of a succession of experienced holders of the post of verger over the years, their profile has been younger and their responsibilities diversified. In the six years he has been with us, Andrew has expanded the role and enhanced his own professional expertise and influence. In 2017, for the first time, the job incorporated the role of 'caretaker' which has previously been taken for granted. Andrew assists with maintaining the fabric of the building as well as the cleaning, refurbishing and improving it for daily use. He supports the Choir and musicians, and the Friends of Lancing Chapel, ensuring a safe welcome for visitors, pupils and staff. In this he is helped by an enthusiastic team of volunteer guides and also Chapel Cleaner, Sue James. His main task, however, is to assist the Chaplain in the celebration of the liturgy and to make sure that the Chapel is a place of continuing prayer and worship.

Mr Jeremy Tomlinson. Steward of Lancing Chapel

Andrew is very much a 'Verger plus', going out of his way to support the life of the Chapel in worship through enabling the smooth running of services and working closely with the sacristan team, in welcoming visitors and over seeing the team of volunteer guides and in his care for the fabric of the building. I am very grateful for his support and friendship during my first year at the College and look forward to many more years working together.

The Rev'd Justin Pottinger. College Chaplain

**Andrew Wynn-Mackenzie, Dip GV  
Verger - Lancing College**

**Secretary, Chichester, Guildford and  
Portsmouth Branch**

# New Virgers in Kingston

**T**he historic town-centre parish church of All Saints, Kingston upon Thames has recently reinstated the role of robed Verger after a gap of seventy-five years.

All Saints is the ancient parish church of Kingston, built on the site of a Saxon minster where the coronations of seven Saxon kings took place, including those of King Edward the Elder (900AD) and King Athelstan (925AD). Today it is the civic church of the Royal Borough and a member of the Major Churches Network.

There had not been a Verger at All Saints since the retirement of the last postholder in 1948, and now there are two, both volunteers and both members of the Guild. There are records of a Verger being part of the church establishment (presumably remunerated) in the 19th century, and the names of the three Vergers from 1899 until 1948 are recorded. A father and son succession held the post from 1902: William Harling until his death in 1933 and then his son until his retirement through ill-health in 1948.

As the church already had a long-standing team of volunteer 'vergers' who help to keep the church open seven days a week throughout the year, the ancient title 'Virger' was adopted for the new roles. The Head Virger and the Under Virger now lead the choir and clergy into and out of the main weekly services (Sunday morning at 9.30am and Choral Evensong at 6.00pm and Wednesday afternoons at 5.30pm), and also at the many Civic and Kingston Episcopal Area services that take place at All Saints. The Under-Virger carries the historic silver-topped Beadle's Staff, which dates back to 1829, and as the photo of William Harling shows (above) was also carried by the Verger in times past.



*All Saints Church,  
Kingston upon Thames*



*William Harling  
- Verger 1902 - 1933*



*John Dewhurst (Head Virger) and  
Iain Nevill (Under-Virger)*

**John Dewhurst  
Head Virger and  
Churchwarden  
All Saints Church  
Kingston upon Thames**

## Oxford Branch

**H**eather Ringrose, Secretary of the Oxford Branch writes... It is always a pleasure to meet with other members, and friends, of the Guild albeit within your own Branch. So it was on an afternoon at the end of June, when a group of us met at a convenient local garden centre (once again), to exchange news and enjoy refreshments, and to be updated with local and national Guild, and other, news.

On Tuesday, 12th September, we are holding the second of this year's Quiet Days at Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, Berkshire from 10.00 am until 3.30 pm - a day of reflection, meditation, celebration and fellowship, to which other members are welcome. For further information, please make contact with our Secretary, Heather Ringrose, ([heatherringrose8@gmail.com](mailto:heatherringrose8@gmail.com)).

## Chichester, Guildford and Portsmouth Branch Branch

**A**ndrew Wynn-Mackenzie, Secretary of the Chichester, Guildford and Portsmouth Branch writes... it has been a long time since our branch has had an article in the magazine so I would like to use this opportunity as a branch summary of the last couple of years. So please forgive me as I rewind!

Mid 2020 we said goodbye and thank you to Jane Gorrie, Branch Secretary (amongst other roles!) and Verger of St Mary's, Horsham who moved to Scotland with her husband. My arm was twisted, and I was persuaded to take on the role of Secretary from Jane. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet at Christmas as the South East were put in the strictest tier of COVID restrictions.

Late 2021 we welcomed Adrienne Bridger to the role of Treasurer taking over from Ricky Richardson who has not only been dedicated to the role for so many years but also to the branch. 2022, we said a fond thank you to our Branch Chaplain, The Rev'd Roy Woodhams who has stood down. We wished him well as he continues to serve the people of Cranleigh, Surrey. We welcomed to succeed Fr Roy, The Rev'd Canon Bruce Ruddock. Canon Bruce formerly Precentor of Peterborough & Worcester Cathedrals and is currently Cathedral Chaplain at Chichester Cathedral & Custos of the St Mary's Hospital almshouses, Chichester. Canon Bruce was admitted by the National Chaplain (Rev'd Rosemary Durwood) during Evensong at Lancing College followed by an admittance of a new member.



We have had one trip so far since I have become secretary. This was at Guildford Cathedral for a Eucharist and lunch kindly organised by our Branch Chairman. 6 of us gathered and a wonderful day was had. Even the wet weather didn't dampen our spirit. The

outings need supporting. A lot of work goes into organising, so I echo the words of our National Chairman and urge you to support your Branch and Guild. If members would like to join us on trips around our branch, you would be made very welcome. Please do contact me using the details on the back page of this magazine. The next trip will be to Chichester for a tour of the almshouses, tea & cake, finishing with Evensong at the Cathedral. Date TBC

Finally, congratulations to a few of our members who celebrate milestone years of being a verger.

Stephen Reeds – 20 years at Guildford Cathedral serving as Canons' Verger

Tim Stannard – 50 years as an Honorary Verger

Richard King – 25 years as a Server and 40 years as an Honorary Verger.





## East Anglia Branch

**C**allum Brittain, Secretary of the East Anglia Branch writes... The Guild of Vergers Annual Conference and Retreat started on Monday 7 August with the Opening Eucharist at St James Parish Church, West Malvern. During this service, three particularly special occasions were marked:

- The Venerable David Jenkins was Installed as our new National Chaplain
- Pamela Cobb was made a National Life Member
- and I received my Diploma with Distinction.

I am personally very proud of our members for their devotion to our Guild, to Pam for her dedication over

the last 27 years as a fantastic Branch Secretary; I have very big boots to fill! David, while also an honorary Branch member, we are very blessed to have a National Chaplain with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Congratulations to both of our members!



It was also a delight to have a big turnout of East Anglia Branch at this year's conference. As well as the

previously mentioned, Ian Cobb, Ben Jenkins and Stephen Stokes also attended the conference. It is always a pleasure to share our fellowship and faith in different ways, if this were a pub trip at the end of the day or simply speaking about how work is going for each of us. I have always said to our East Anglia members that I see the Conference and Retreat as a 'Vergers Holiday'. We Learn, we Worship, we Try new customs and traditions, we Socialise and we Relax.

If you have never been to the Conference and Retreat, I would actively encourage you to consider it, it is a fantastic time away and it really recharges your physical, mental and spiritual batteries!

## Margaret Boxall - an extraordinary achievement – 40 years of loyal service

**M**argaret has stood down as verger/sacristan, at Christ Church, Tettenhall Wood near Wolverhampton, a voluntary role she has held for 40 years. Christ Church is Margaret's mother church where she was baptised, confirmed and married and has been a parishioner there for 75 years. Margaret became verger in 1983 during the time of the then incumbent the Rev'd Guy Smith. In due course she also took on the role of sacristan, initially as deputy and then at the turn of the millennium, sacristan proper, a role she shared with a friend.

She is still in charge of flower arranging 36 years on having been part of the flower team prior to this. A willing and talented team of ladies help her especially at festivals. She initiated the Flower Festival in 1988.

Margaret continues as leader and secretary of the Christ Church Fellowship, sits on the Pastoral Group and is one of the leaders of evening prayer on Friday

afternoons. She has been a member of the Christ Church Mothers Union for 33 years and is a past leader and secretary. She served as church warden from 2012 to 2016.



*Margaret receiving her certificate of admission to the Guild from Team Rector the Rev'd Phil Wooton – September 2018.*

A late comer to the Church of England Guild of Vergers Margaret joined the Birmingham, Lichfield and Coventry branch in 2011. She transferred to the

Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester branch in 2018 and was finally, formally admitted to the Guild at Christ Church in September of that year.

Margaret said her verging highlight was definitely "verging for the Bishop of Wolverhampton at our 150th year celebration". She also very much enjoyed verging at weddings as "you certainly see all the fashions."

In her resignation letter to her P.C.C. she said that verging was a job she absolutely loved doing but bouts of illness have unfortunately taken their toll. She added that it had been a great privilege to serve in this capacity and she had always done her best.

Well done, good and faithful servant!

**David Anwyl-Hughes**  
Branch Secretary  
Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester Branch

# Frank James Woodward

## 4 January 1936 – 5 December 2022

**F**rank Woodward was the Verger at St Leonards Church, Balderstone nr Blackburn Lancashire, for over 40 years. Sadly Frank was diagnosed with Cancer at the start of the Covid Pandemic, during which the Church was closed for services. He was receiving care in a home in Blackburn prior to his death on the 5 December 2022.



Frank joined the Blackburn Branch of the Guild in 1984

and was admitted to the Guild in Blackburn Cathedral. He was one of the longest serving members of the Blackburn Branch, supported by his wife Anne.

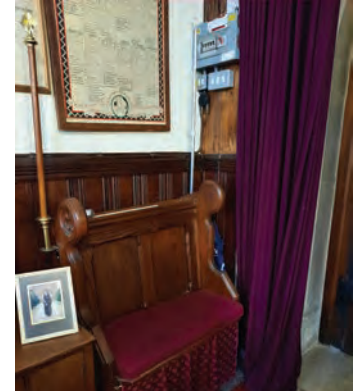
Frank received his 30 years certificate in 2014 at the Lancaster Priory Festival. Along with Anne, he attended many of the Guild Festivals and events throughout various Cathedrals and Parish Churches.

At his Church in the small village of Balderstone, Frank would often be seen caring for the grounds, as well as the "liturgical" jobs of the Verger. He was noted for his work load and commitment and especially during interregnums, with weddings, funerals and baptism arrangements on his agenda, again supported by Anne who

attended to the flowers, linen, cleaning among other things. Sadly due to illness and with the Covid pandemic Frank and Anne were unable to attend any Branch meetings, Frank was not IT trained so was unable to join virtually.

His funeral was held at his "Spiritual Home" of St Leonards on the 20 December, and I, along with my colleague Pam Derbyshire were privileged to attend on behalf of the Three Branches. It was an honour to be able to visit Frank in the last days of his eventful life, Rest in Peace loyal Servant of Christ and Rise in Glory.

**Tony Hales  
Volunteer Verger,  
Blackburn Cathedral and  
Headquarter member of  
the Guild**



*Editors notes: The Church that Frank loved so much has kept his seat marked in a special way. St Leonard's Church in Balderstone have shown their love an appreciation to Frank, a much loved part of their Church by keeping a picture of him alongside his Virge and Seat. How we would all love to be remembered in our own Churches in this way. Thank you St Leonard's.*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



**Tuesday 12 September 2023,  
10.00am-3.30pm**

Oxford Branch are holding a Quiet Day at Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, Berkshire - a day of reflection, meditation, celebration and fellowship, to which all members of the Guild are welcome. For further information, please make contact with Heather Ringrose, [heatherringrose8@gmail.com](mailto:heatherringrose8@gmail.com)



**Wednesday 27  
September 2023**

London, Southwark Branch are hosting us at Croydon Minster for a Festival. For more information call Denise ASAP - 07957 149005.



**Monday 5 until  
Thursday 8 August 2024**

Annual Retreat and Training Conference.



**Monday 4 until  
Thursday 7 August 2025**

Annual Retreat and Training Conference.



**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](mailto:CEGVMedia@gmail.com)

# Ernest Nicholas Kröhn

**E**rnest, known by many as Ernie, was born and grew up in Southampton, but due to his family situation went to live with his aunt in Bournemouth. He became a member of St John the Evangelist Church in Boscombe. In its heyday, it had a robed choir of 25 under the direction of Norman Wilson and Ernie was a longstanding stalwart of the choir for many years.

Ernie's day job was that of a window dresser for Foster Brothers. With his interest in choral music, Ernie could be found in many of the stores, setting up displays, with his radio on listening to Choral Evensong on Radio 3 on a Wednesday afternoon.

I was encouraged by school friends to join St John's whilst at secondary school as it had a thriving choir and a strong and very active youth club. As many of you that remembered Ernie, he was a very warm and welcoming person who always took an interest in everyone he met. His passion for church music shone through during practice and services. The older members of the youth club would continue their fellowship at Ernie's on a Sunday night, which encouraged the friendships to grow stronger. One member of the congregation was David Dorey who was a good friend of Ernie's and the two of them would talk 'church' most of the time. Both became members of the Guild and David moved on from Bournemouth to become Head Verger at Coventry Cathedral and latterly at Westminster Abbey. Ernie would be a frequent visitor to both cathedrals. I left St John's and moved to St Peter's Bournemouth but kept in touch with Ernie over the years and when I left Bournemouth and moved to London. When I visited my family in Bournemouth, I made a point of always touching base with him. Latterly, when I became a verger and joined the Guild, our friendship became stronger, and we would meet up at our annual conferences. It was always

a joy to see his smiling face and we would spend many an hour reminiscing about past members of the church. Ernie enjoyed coming to conference and was always up for a laugh. I recall a visit we made to Hendon Police College, and he was very quick to jump into the back of the police van and pretend to be an angry hooligan. I think this picture went viral around the Guild.

Although St John's did not use a verger for ceremonial roles, he was always the person who carried out the role of a verger behind the scenes, quietly and efficiently. Being part of the Guild enabled Ernie to wear his gown and white bow tie for services as seen at the Festival at St Paul's Cathedral for our 75th Anniversary.

Ernie was for many years a stalwart member of the Bournemouth and Channel Isles Branch and Area Leader for that Branch and (when it was in existence) the Winchester Branch and served many years on the Central Council of the Guild. The Guild honoured him with National Life Membership for all his work.

When I learnt that Ernie passed away on Pentecost Sunday 28th May 2023. I sent a message to a school friend who said "he was a great influence on me when I was young; I always enjoyed his sunny personality in the St John's choir and his sense of dignity in worship.

We used to have some fun times at his



place after choir practice. For some reason, I always remember watching 'The Goodies' round his house. I never felt anything but kindness and warmth for him." His vicar Revd. Roy Khakhria said he was held in high esteem at the church and that he was a Verger's verger. I could not have agreed with either of those two comments more. It was a privilege for me to lead Ernie's coffin in and out of the church for the last time at his funeral on 5th July, both as a friend and as National Chairman of the Guild that he loved. Many of the old youth club came from all over the country to pay their respects after over 50 years of knowing him. One couple celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary by attending his funeral on the very day. Vergers also gathered from near and far to provide a guard of honour, something that I am sure would have humbled a good and faithful servant. May he rest in loving peace in the presence of his Lord.

**John Kirby-Shearer**





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



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