

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

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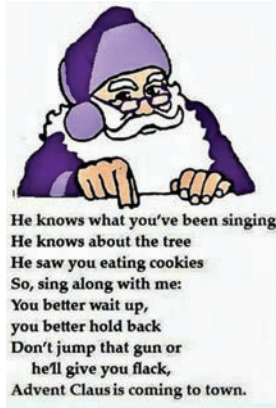
The National Chairman, John Kirby-Shearer, writes...



The Autumn started with sunshine and warmth in most of the United Kingdom. This soon changed and Storms Babet and Ciaran wreaked havoc in Scotland and parts of England. The damage to folks' homes found no boundaries. Further afield, the war still rages in Ukraine with Russia trying to dominate the world stage. If that was not enough, Israel and Palestine have re-ignited their ongoing conflict. In all this fighting and havoc in the world, it is the innocent and ordinary civilians that suffer the most. The death toll is devastating, yet our political leaders appear to be letting this happen. It is heart-breaking to turn on the news over the past fortnight to learn the loss of valuable life.

So, what can we do as vergers in the church do? Well, the first thing that springs to mind, is remember all these issues in our daily prayers. We can also

ensure that our churches are open during the day as a place for others to come in and pray and be quiet. Ensuring that our churches and cathedrals are places that are accessible to all. This would be a huge help and comfort to those who need that special place during this time.



As Winter approaches, Advent, Latin for "coming", will soon be upon us. It is the church's period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. I remember when I worked in the commercial world, Christmas Shows were happening during August and September to showcase all the new seasonal goodies. The shops are now well into the Christmas season, if you had not noticed, it is hard not to miss it. Some might say that it is now getting longer and longer. The television now

has 4 channels devoted to Christmas films, Christmas food is featuring on the Food Channels and even one of the music changes is playing the Festive music, all a good three months in advance of the great day.

This meme on one of the social media outlets, which I must say, I totally agree with, and I would like to share with you. May I wish you a prayerful Advent, a Festive Christmas Season and when the New Year comes, that peace may be in our world again.

John Kirby-Shearer



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Colin Campbell inspecting the roof of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh (see page 4)



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 National Chaplain, The Venerable Dr David Jenkins, writes...

Dear Sisters and Brothers

I am writing this letter on a very wet and windy Sunday morning before heading off to church to celebrate All Saints tide. Despite the rather challenging weather this is one of my favourite times of the year with its vibrant colours and 'mellow fruitfulness' providing a wonderful reredos for our remembering and reflection.

Some of you may know that before coming to Suffolk I was a residentiary canon at Carlisle Cathedral. There, one of my favourite spots was at the top of the south aisle, where stood a life size replica of that striking monument to our ancestors' faith, the Bewcastle Cross. It was in this corner that we celebrated our weekly Celtic eucharist under the watchful and saintly eyes of the Celts, Aidan, Herbert and Kentigern, and the Anglo-Saxon Oswald. And they were not alone in their vigil. The altar at the top of the north aisle is similarly overlooked by the iconography of the saints, this time commemorating the great Anglo-Saxon saints, Cuthbert, Ecgrith and Athelwold.

This physical manifestation of the power of the saints to inspire is repeated up and down the churches of this land. Even in those places of worship where modern sensibilities no longer feel comfortable with any liturgical or spiritual recognition of saints, we find material traces of our forebears' devotion to the saints. Thousands of our churches are dedicated to saints, and Patronal Festivals, with their saintly Propers, are significant moments in the life of individual parishes. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* lists about 1000 saints which the editors admit is only a portion of those who might be given the epithet, saint, and the number of what we might term 'Celtic' saints stretches into the many thousands from the universally famous such as Patrick, Ninian, Hilda, and Columba to the lesser known such as the Welsh St Melangell who, at great risk to her own life, hid a hare under her skirts to protect it from royal huntsmen and the diminutive Cornishman St Neot who apparently had to stand on a stool to reach the altar in order to say mass.

Of course, despite the often-fantastical tales of ecclesiastical derring-do surrounding their ministries, saints are not 'other'; they are not some sort of spiritual Olympian or predestined holy elite. They are you and me for there is no doubt that there are saints here among us now. Every parish priest worth his or her salt will be able to tell stories of parishioners, ordinary folk, the Lazaruses and the Marthas, who through their lifestyle and selflessness inspired, moved, and even converted those around them just as other saints have done down through the ages.

So what we celebrate at this time of reflection and remembrance each year is not simply something of the past, or even something beyond our comprehension and experience,

but rather something in which we all have a part; namely that sanctification of humankind brought about by the Incarnation. By the time you actually get to read this letter we shall be travelling through the seasons of Advent and Christmas, that moment when God reached down and became man and in so doing made it possible for us also to reach up and to touch the divine. For clergy and vergers this is an incredibly busy time of year but amongst all that activity, conducted under the watchful gaze of saints, that great 'cloud of witnesses', may we be constantly mindful that amongst us saints do also walk.

I hope you all get a chance to have a well-earned rest over the Christmas period. Until our next meeting every blessing on you all.

Yours in Christ
Fr David
National Chaplain

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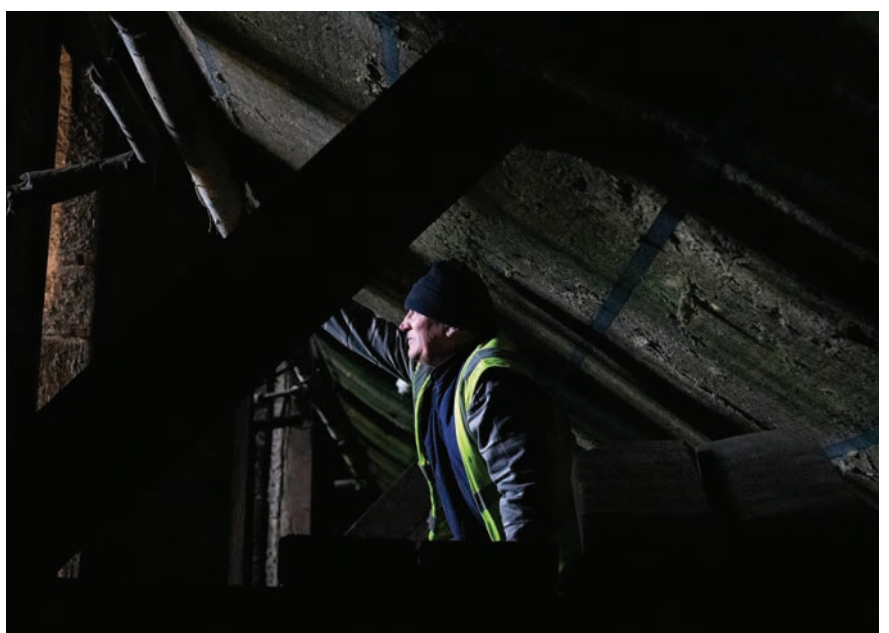
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'On the Verge' – a photo documentary project by Beth Mollison

Beth Mollison writes... I am a student photographer, currently working on my BA (Hons) Arts in Photography at Edinburgh Napier University. I have always found churches, cathedrals, or any religious buildings, to be incredibly inspiring and visually captivating places. When I was tasked to create a photo documentary project for my course, it made sense that I would go to St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh – which was very nearby to where I was staying.

After spending a few weeks at the cathedral watching everything that went on and gradually getting to know the staff and everyone's place within it all, I decided I wanted to capture a lesser told story – that of the Verger, Colin Campbell. Colin was very eager to show me everywhere in the cathedral – even on the roof and into the roof passages! He told me all sorts of architectural facts about the building, pointed out things I would never noticed before and educated me more about the Episcopal Church. It was very clear to me that he had such a well of knowledge and love for the cathedral – which he has been working at for almost 40 years! I noticed how busy he was throughout the day, checking on various things, fixing and repairing things, making sure everything was running smoothly, cleaning, polishing, preparing things for the ceremonies – the list goes on. He did all of this, and it occurred to me that most of the people coming in to see the ceremonies or just to wander around, barely noticed him hurrying about. I thought this would be interesting to focus on, in order to give people an insight into what actually goes on within a cathedral, what goes into the preparation of the ceremonies they see and just how much hard work is done to keep the Cathedral looking as beautiful as it does. Therefore, I started capturing Colin working away and over the course of about 3-4 months, I completed my project. I exhibited this in the cathedral over August during the Edinburgh Fringe festival and it was the perfect finale for my time spent there – especially because people started recognising Colin from the pictures!

Instagram @bethmollisonphotos



History of the Guild Conference

I have been asked to write a short history of the Vergers Conference from its foundation to the present day, to mark its 50th Anniversary in 2024. The first conference was held at St Gabriel's College, Kennington on Tuesday 23rd April 1974. Under the chairmanship of Alfred White, Deans Virger of Guildford Cathedral. The conference opened with a Eucharist with the Ven W. Purcell, Archdeacon of Dorking as the preacher. The cost of the conference was £9.00 or £3.00 per day – grand value. Other speakers included the Revd Richard Parsons, Southern Province Chaplain, the Revd Christopher Bedford, from Holy Cross Church, Cromer Street London and Ron Mehuish, Deans Verger - Exeter Cathedral. All the delegates agreed that this was an excellent idea and should become an annual occurrence. And so the CEGV Annual Conference was born and since then has flourished.



The second conference was also held at St Gabriel's but then moved in its third year to the Wilson Carlisle Training Centre for the Church Army, in Blackheath. This was the last venue in London.



The fourth venue moved to Birmingham. Harborne

Hall was a delightful retreat centre run by nuns, who went to bed and clocked the doors at 9.30pm. There was a need for 'The Escape Committee' to be formed as some vergers needed some light entertainment by going a Public House. When it was time to return and gain entry to the Hall, a gentle tap on the window of the Conference Secretary was made to gain admission via his window. The Escape Committee owed a great deal of thanks to Les Hensfold for this service.



Very soon, the Guild outgrew Harborne Hall and moved to Newman College, a Roman Catholic teacher training establishment, where the facilities were far better. It had its own Bar! However, this did not deter the Escape Committee from meeting. A social evening became part of the timetable to enable vergers to demonstrate their many talents. How can forget 'Comic John' who never quite got to the punchline of his jokes, or Anthony Allen in full drag, chasing the National Chaplain. It was here that we met with our organist, Philp Ypres Smith, who is still with us today. Newman College was built on a hill so there were steps – everywhere.



After many years and with the college expanding, we

were forced into looking for a new home. We found it at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney. All Saints was founded as a nunnery for Anglican Sisters, a large plot of land with a huge building and a quadrangle with oh so small bedrooms arranged around it. It too had a bar, in which on one occasion we drank them out of Gin. There was a local hostelry a short stroll away for the Escape Committee to get out of Gin. The centre's main attraction was the stunning chapel. It was designed by Sir Ninian Comper. It was expanded in 1963 by his son to give more space to the life of the centre. We used the chapel to its full capacity in our many styles of worship during our visits.



Sadly, in 2014 we were on the move again as All Saints was put up for sale. The call went out to the verger community and a verger in Malvern suggested that perhaps a local training college might suit our requirements. After a visit by a small team, we found ourselves at the Elim Theological College in West Malvern. During the summer holiday, it doubles as a conference centre. The accommodation is far superior to previous centres and it also had an outdoor swimming pool. Sadly, no bar, but it is a short walk up hill to the local hostelry. The village church opened its doors to us and we make good use of the church during our stay.



The standard of speakers has always been high coupled with three meals a day and no washing up. En-suite rooms, amazing views and situated on the side of the Malvern Hills, what more can you wish for to make friends, enjoy fellowship, learn and even be taught.

Now I hear some of you saying "It's too far", well, people come from far and wide, Scotland, the Borders, Cumbria, Lincolnshire, Cornwall and London. They even come from the USA and Canada, so you have no excuse for not being there. Conference is a time for retreat, restore, learn, fellowship, fun and worship, so seek out the dates, book the time off NOW. We cannot guarantee that the price is still £9.00 but bursaries are available for first time attenders.

Fr Tom Cameron

In the next edition – How the Escape Committee captured the National Chaplain for a night!

*Editors note:
Be part of history and attend this year's conference!*

Cantuar Festival 2023 Thoughts



Oliver Marcus of the London, Southwark and Chelmsford Branch writes... On a sunny day on Wednesday 27 September an enthusiastic group of vergers from around the Guild gathered in the beautiful Croydon Minster dedicated to St John the Baptist. The Minster has a long and distinguished history. It is believed to have been founded in Saxon time since there is a record in 960 of a Priest of Croydon witnessing a Will, although the first records of a church building is in the Domesday Book (1086). The church has close links with the Archbishops of Canterbury who had a summer Palace in Croydon. Much of the Palace buildings still stand close to the Minster and is now use by the Old Palace of John Whitgift School. Six Archbishops of Canterbury are buried in the church and many others will have worshipped there! Kings and Queens were regular visitors to Croydon – Kings and Queens who are documented visiting are: Henry V1, Henry V11 and Queen Elizabeth the First. Ten bishops have been consecrated here and the parish continues to be open for worship, ordinations and major diocesan and civic events throughout the year. In the Mediaeval period the parish church was mainly a perpendicular style structure but this was severely destroyed by fire

in 1867. Following the fire, only the South Porch and outer walls remained however under the direction of Sir George Gilbert Scott, the church was rebuilt incorporating the remains and eventually following the design of the mediaeval building. The church was re-consecrated in 1870. The church still contains many monuments and fixtures from the old church. The church was named Croydon Parish Church but was re-designated as a Minster in 2011!

As we arrived from 09.30am we were greeted by Denise Mead the Verger & Parish Administrator of Croydon Minster. We were instructed to put our robes in the choir vestry and there was coffee and tea in the North Aisle. This was a chance to catch up with other Vergers from all over the Guild. During coffee we were welcomed by Fr David Adamson Hill the Assistant Priest who is responsible for St George's, Waddon. Following coffee, we robed and sat in the choir stalls for a short service of Holy Communion led by Fr David. Here we admitted a new London, Southwark and Chelmsford Member to the Branch. The service was followed by the traditional guild photograph.

After the service we were taken on a short tour of the Minster led by David Morgan the church's Education Officer. David told us about the church's history and monuments etc. David was extremely knowledgeable about the parish, its many bishops and benefactors including Archbishop John Whitgift who was Archbishop of Canterbury during Queen Elizabeth 1st reign and the beginning of King James 1st. Whitgift a major benefactor to Croydon. He founded the local Almshouses (dated 1596) which is still in use today (in fact, Andrew Page & Dee were staying in the guest flat). John



Whitgift also founded both Whitgift & Trinity Schools. The Whitgift Shopping Centre still bears his name. Archbishop Whitgift's tomb shows him lying in prayer surrounded by allegorical figures and cherubs. Next to his tomb is a 16th century carved tomb which was believed to be the brother of Hugh Warham, another Archbishop! The memorial to Archbishop Hereward Wake who died in 1736/7 was dedicated by Robert Runcie his successor in 1989.

In the South Aisle behind iron railings is the (still slightly fire damaged) white marble monument of Archbishop Sheldon the founder of the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford who died in Croydon in 1677. Emblems of mortality are carved beneath his reclining figure. Nearby is another remnant of the brass to Thomas Heron (d.1544) depicting his daughters. Also on this wall are two small recesses one thought to be an aumbry with a piscina drain inserted, the other closer to the south porch was possibly a former water stoup. Both side chapels are the sight of earlier chantry chapels (a chapel paid for by a patron) where prayers are said on his death. John Whitgift's Tomb is contained in the St Nicholas Chapel.

Following our tour of the Minster we took our robes over to the church hall and went to a local restaurant 'Mahala' for lunch. Most of us enjoyed chicken dishes with either chips or mashed potatoes followed by pancakes. Much fellowship was enjoyed.

Dr Andrew Page of the Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester Branch writes... The Canterbury Festival this year was hosted by the London, Southwark and Chelmsford Branch at Croydon Minster where we were most hospitably welcomed by Branch members and Minster staff. Between the Eucharist in the morning and the Evensong, which closed the day, we had the chance to learn a little more about our surroundings. The Minster took its present form about the end of the 14th century (although completely gutted by fire in 1867 the outer walls and tower survived and it was rebuilt largely on its mediaeval pattern with a number of fittings and monuments preserved). However there has been a

church on the site since Saxon times and it continues to be the parish church of Croydon as it has been for well over a thousand years. For several hundred years Croydon was a home to the Archbishops of Canterbury (their palace was next door to the church and much of it still stands as part of the Whitgift School for Girls). Six Archbishops of Canterbury are buried in the church, two of whom have imposing memorials. John Whitgift (from the time of Elizabeth I) is shown becomingly lying with hands clasped in prayer. Gilbert Sheldon (reign of Charles II) by contrast appears to be sitting up on a sort of chaise longue with a curious smirk. Samuel Pepys records gossip about him that "the Archbishop of Canterbury that now is, do keep a wench, and that he is a very wench as can be".

The Festival also provided a tour of the Almshouses, founded by Archbishop Whitgift in 1596, to provide accommodation for the poor of the parish. These are built around a quadrangle with gardens, rather in the style of an Oxford college, and have remained largely unchanged forming a delightful oasis in the middle of a very urban area. They still provide sheltered housing although the original monastic cells have been regrouped to make small flats and the Refectory has become a common room. The charming chapel remains in regular use (though frequent daily attendance is no longer compulsory). Whitgift's study continues to be used as an office with some of his furniture and artefacts still there



together with the original warrant from Elizabeth I permitting the construction of the buildings.

While we had an enjoyable and instructive day, we could not help being aware of the world around us. That morning a girl on her way to the Whitgift school, also attended by the vicar's daughter, was murdered while trying to defend her friend. Despite all the pressures this put on the staff of the Minster, which serves the local community and is the de facto chapel of the school, our welcome and programme proceeded as planned. In such circumstances we appreciated all the more the generous hospitality of Denise Mead and her team.



On Retirement

Sue Ansell writes.. The year 2000 saw 2 big changes in my life. Firstly, my husband, Alf died suddenly in March and then in July I started in St Nicolas Church, Cranleigh as Verger. I agreed to do the job on a 3 month trial. 23 years, 2 months and 9 days later, I retired! What a long 3 months that was!!

I loved being a Verger from the very beginning and learnt a lot about church life, the Litany, the Liturgical seasons, etc. St Nicolas is a busy church, as I found out. Not only did we have the extra services for Easter and Christmas, but Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, school services, Mother's Union Communion were only a few among the extras.

I joined The Guild of Vergers in early 2001 and this opened another world to me too. My first Rally (as it was then), was at Lincoln Cathedral, where Canon Roger Royale was our guest speaker. He was very funny, but also had a serious side and was very pro vergers.

My role within the guild progressed as the years have gone by. I started off at branch level and then became Training Administrator 7 years ago, which I love doing. I have made many friends within the guild and feel that I belong to a big family. The Guild and my role as a Verger, filled a big gap in my life after my husband died and for that I am very grateful.

It was a hard decision to retire, but the time had come to hang up my Virge. My last service was on 24 September. I was fine until I had a presentation of an orchid and some money that had been collected for me by the congregation. I was emotional then and only just held things together!

I still attend St Nicolas but find it hard not to jump up and lead the clergy out. Also, my trained eye is roving all the time! I have not been replaced as Verger, which is very sad, but who knows what will happen in the future.



My presentation from my Rector, Canon Roy Woodhams.

Sue Ansell. Dip. G.V.

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

London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch

Irene Money

Oxford Branch

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

Somerset & Avon Branch

Marek Barden, Chris Eynon

St Albans Branch

Jackie Rudom, Brian Willett

York Branch

George Cook

HQ Member

Roger Lawrence

RIP

E William (Bill) Pearce
Christine McLaren
Paul Burston

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.



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

ALL AVAILABLE FROM THE GUILD SHOP

My Story: My CEGV Diploma

Steve Short writes... This morning we had a chilly Sunday Service at St Saviour's Parish Church, Westgate-on-Sea, where I am privileged to be Head Virger. We are on the South-East corner of Kent and the North Eastly wind, is 'neither fit for man nor beast'!

I would like to begin by thanking my dear friend Stuart Willmott (Bell Tower Captain and Head Virger), who sadly passed away this year, for being my mentor and teaching me so much about bell ringing and what would become the beginnings of my journey to become a CoE Virger. I should add that my journey has only just begun, and I have so much to learn and so many more wonderful people to meet along the way. I'm starting to think I'm very much a Pilgrim - it's definitely not the destination, but more about the journey, new friends we will encounter and the life experiences met along the way.

I was humbled to appear with my new friends of the CEGV on the front cover of the Autumn 2022/Issue 316 and wrote to say thank you for such warmth and friendship, on arrival at my very first conference. So you will understand my enthusiasm to attend this year to learn more, to share stories and maybe support others.

I did not to attend the 2023 Training Conference and Retreat. Due to a slight

error of judgement resulting in a broken shoulder, minor head wound and a couple of broken ribs. I was nudged off my bicycle on my day-off from work! Fear not as your prayers, those of my local branch, friends and my wonderful family were answered, and I am back 'on-duty' in church today. God bless you all...

Too my great joy and lots of studying, I have successfully passed my CEGV diploma - with honours and I would like in particular, to thank Stuart Willmott and Rev'd Karen Gooding for their encouragement and support throughout. But without being physically able to attend the conference, what would happen to my diploma?

Local branch members of the CEGV arranged to attend the conference and collect my certificate and hood and these were transported safely to Canterbury Cathedral and then to my home in Westgate-on-Sea. Unbeknown to me our Church Warden Christine Attwood, had plans for the Archdeacon Revd Dr Will Adam to attend St Saviour's to preside over our Sunday Eucharist Service and I would both Virge the Archdeacon and receive my diploma and hood. You will appreciate that the night before, was somewhat a restless affair. Revd Will was kind and generous with his comments and I (red faced and

nervous) received my diploma. Our congregation have been so welcoming of me and so supportive, I've no words to explain how much this has meant.

So now the Diploma is complete, what next?

Having the Diploma certainly doesn't mean I know it all! In fact, I've only just begun to explore the role of Virger. From processing the Gospel to putting out the wheelie bins, the role is varied, challenging and gives me great pleasure, especially when I am able to help and support others.

I'll finish by saying, my next challenge is 'attempting' to be a reader during Sunday Services and whilst very nervous, I chose the Psalms which are truly wonderful. God is there by my side and helps me to achieve goals I never thought I could.

Psalm 138 v. 3

In the day that I called to you, you answered me; you put new strength in my soul.

God Bless.

Steve Short - Virger
St Saviour's
Dip.GV.



In front of the High Altar at St Saviour's Parish Church, proud as can be.



Archdeacon of Canterbury and Residentiary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, the Revd Dr William Adam kindly agreed to present me with my Diploma and Academic Hood.



I don't know how many individual pages I wrote during my diploma, but for fun when measuring all of the volumes together, it equates to 6 inches or 15 centimetres of written text!



The East Anglian Beer and Cider Festival at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Jesus turned water into wine, St Edmundsbury Cathedral...

James Stark, Head Verger, and Events Manager of St Edmundsbury Cathedral writes... This is a rather interesting subject to be speaking about. There will be some who think a beer festival in a Cathedral is unfathomable while others may be intrigued. I am going to try to give you a Verger's first-hand experience regarding what has become a regular booking at our Cathedral.

The idea was first presented to the Cathedral Chapter around five years ago. The previous locations of the festival were at The Apex, which is a modern concert hall and before that, the Corn Exchange, which is now probably the finest looking Wetherspoons in the country! The festival had really reached capacity at The Apex, meaning it was time to branch out and find a larger venue at the heart of the community.

2023 was the third year of St Edmundsbury Cathedral hosting the event. This year, we welcomed roughly 6,000 people to the festival over a six-day period, over the August bank holiday weekend. The festival spread out over the whole of the site, including in the Cathedral Nave, and out onto the Cathedral Garth. The event was a brilliant occasion, welcoming many new visitors to The Cathedral, who would have never set foot in our wonderful building otherwise. We get minimal push back from our community and we're very lucky that most of our staff and volunteers really embrace doing something different and welcome all these new faces brilliantly.

The setting up of such a huge event was undertaken by the Vergers team, but also from the many volunteers around the local area representing local charities. The idea is that each volunteer would record their number of hours and their 'paycheck' would be donated to their chosen charity. The

presentation of cheques for these Charities will be taking place at the Cathedral on Saturday 2 December. The Vergers Team at St Edmundsbury have all been brought up in their role as a Verger to assist with events when needed. This is mainly due to my role being a dual role, consisting of Head Verger and Events Manager, meaning they have no choice but to assist me!

The Vergers were all in charge of at least one day of the festival, meaning they were the designated go-to people for any problems that may have occurred, which I'm pleased to report that there were very little, if any, issues! We work the rota so verger staff can also have time off to undertake some very important business of sampling some of the alcohol on offer, around 250 casks of real ale. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to get round to sampling all of them. This has now become an objective for 2024!

While all of this was going on, The Cathedral ran its normal rounds of daily services, some inside the Cathedral, and some in one of our function rooms upstairs. This ensured that our congregation members could still come to the Cathedral for our main offering of worship. The Vergers made sure that every service ran smoothly whilst the hustle and bustle of the festival was going on. We continued to livestream services for those joining digitally. I'm pleased to report that we received only a few letters of complaint regarding the festival, and that the comments of 'how lovely is this to be in a Cathedral' far outweighed the negative ones.

The hardest job for the team was the clear up. Due to the good weather, we closed the Cathedral Nave to festival goers in the early evening on the Saturday with the Garth area still



available to them, to ensure that The Cathedral could be prepared for our Sunday Services. The way we have worked it in the last few years is that we arrange our lovely (and heavy) pews back to some sort of normality to enable our normal Sunday congregation to use, roughly around 150 or so. This means that (holds breath while he writes) the bars of the many casks can remain in the side aisles of the Cathedral until the festival closed on the Monday evening. We have learnt that burning incense does really hide the smell well. We were provided with a particularly strong smelling one by a former Cathedral Curate on his most recent visit to Walsingham. This has really been key over the last few years.

We are very much looking forward to the fourth instalment of the festival next August, which we hope to be bigger and better than ever! Names to mention would be the wonderful Vergers team here, Lewis, Ben, Alan, Steve and our cleaner, Julie.

We have really tried to make sure that although this is such a big event in the Cathedral calendar, normal Cathedral business continues. The Cathedral Choirs are on their summer break, so there is no displacing of any Choral Evensongs, instead, we did Evening Prayer daily, as well as Morning Prayer and a Eucharists somewhere in the day. This was the real deal breaker in the first year of negotiations, making sure that our main core value of worship continued as normal. We also managed to tie the festival into our exhibition in the Cathedral Treasury, producing a 'Food and Drink' exhibition of books from our Ancient Library. Many thanks to our Librarian Stephen (who wanted a mention!).



A brief Meditation on the Figure of the Verger

*Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?
The watchman said, The morning cometh,
an also the night:
if ye will enquire, enquire ye:
return, come.*
(Isaiah 21 vv. 11–12)

The first time I attended an Anglican celebration as a Roman Catholic, I was particularly struck by a specific figure: a man dressed in a special antique robe holding a wand who was preceding the procession of celebrants with a solemn step. It seemed that he was giving the right direction to the clergy: he led celebrants and ministrants towards the sanctuary to meet Christ the Lord and the lectors to the ambo to proclaim the Word of God. A sort of marshal of faith made way for the shepherds of the people of God like a sentry pointing out the sunrise (the cross of the crucified-resurrected Christ) with his staff: «consurget virga de Israel – a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel» (Numbers 24 v. 17).

In that verger, I also witnessed a liturgical drum major leading the Grand King's procession, holding a staff that introduces the harmony of community prayer. The Bible verse Colossians 3 v. 16 encourages believers to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

The earthly liturgy, with its beautiful musical harmony, offers a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is a destination toward which the entire people of God is moving, and where Christ serves as the Minister of the Sanctuary. As John Donne eloquently expressed in his poem "Hymne to God my God, in my Sickness," he anticipates entering that holy room where he will be made God's music forevermore («[...] I am coming to that Holy roome, / Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore, / I shall be made thy Musique [...]»

This was my first impression; the second one was an image I had seen in a book about the Oxford Movement, when I was writing an article on the figure of John Henry Newman: the splendid painting of *The Light of the World* by **William Holman Hunt**, which is preserved in the **Keble Chapel** in Oxford, was evoked in my mind. «Lead, Saviour, lead me home in childlike faith, / Home to my God». In Hunt's picture Jesus appears as the Divine Traveler who knocks at our door, he who is the very Way to the Father. Instead of a marking wand he holds a shining lantern in his left hand symbolizing the light of consciousness, «aboriginal Vicar of Christ» (John

Henry Newman, A Letter addressed to the Duke of Norfolk) in us. Behind the Saviour's back amidst the ghostly branches of the trees the dawn of a new day is rising: **the Morning Star is here!**

Jesus, the **Divine Verger**, leads us through the contradictions of our existence to our true homeland, where we are embraced by the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As stated in Philippians 3:20, «our homeland is in heaven, and we are waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven».

«Why should I court my Master's foe? / [...] A pilgrim to a better land, / An heir of joys at God's right hand» (John Keble, *The Star in the East*).

All of us, as members of the Church of Christ, are pilgrims in this world, journeying towards Christ and with Christ, our Master, Shepherd, and King. The verger, although not the leader of this pilgrimage (which liturgical processions symbolize), also follows the glorious Cross of the Lord, just like all other believers. The verger represents every baptized person and embodies the disciples who guide others to Christ through their own lives. In a way, the verger's solemn yet humble appearance is reminiscent of John the Baptist, who pointed to the Lamb of God, saying "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3 v. 30).

A character such as **the verger does not exist at present time in Roman liturgy**, at least in Latin countries such as Italy. However, some German Catholic cathedrals have individuals who have similar roles in opening liturgical processions. They are called **Küster** (from Latin *custos* meaning "guardian," "keeper," or "watchman"). Their primary responsibility is to prepare sacristy and presbytery for all liturgical celebrations and assist priests at altars when there are no altar servers. In Austria and southern German-speaking countries, as well as in South Tyrol (the northernmost region of Italy where most people speak German), they are called **Mesner** (from medieval Latin *mansionarius* meaning "housekeeper"). In Italian, they are referred to as **sacrestano** (from Latin *sacrista* meaning "keeper of sacred things").

Similarly to the **Guild of Vergers** in the UK, there is an association in South Tyrol that brings together all the sextons in the region. It is called **Mesnergemeinschaft**. In the rest of Italy, there is a national association of sacristans called **FIUDACS** (Federazione italiana Unioni Diocesane Addetti al



Culto/Sacristi). The Mesnergemeinschaft was founded in the alpine city of Bolzano/Bozen in February 1966. Bishop Joseph Gargitter addressed the South Tyrolean sacristans during its foundation, urging them to consider their service as a service to faith and to let this service serve Christ. Although it may be considered a minor and humble service compared to other liturgical ministries, it is important to remember that «God loveth a cheerful giver» and that «through this ministry, they glorify God by their professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ» (2 Corinthians 9 vv. 7; 13).

In the Roman Catholic liturgy, the function of the verger is expressed through the ringing of a bell. This audible signal alerts the assembly that the celebrants are entering and proceeding to the altar for the worship service. The visual presence of the verger in the Processional and the auditory sound of the bell both serve to invite the assembly of believers to prepare their hearts for encountering the Lord: 'Lift up your hearts!'.

In Anglican celebrations, the verger also accompanies clerics or acolytes to the ambo for the proclamation of the Word, so «that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true Religion» (Concerning the Service of the Church, The 1662 Book of Common Prayer).

I am certain of it: Anglicans and Catholics share the same faith in our common baptism, as well as in the presence of Christ in the two tables of Word and Bread (Jerome, Eccl. 3 v. 12–13; Augustine, Sermo 78, 2; Ambrose, Enarratis in Ps. 1, 33; Concil Constitution Dei Verbum, VII, 21). This shared faith enables us to approach the open heart of the Father through the sacrifice of His Son, Christ Himself. Vergers and sacristans also play a significant role in this journey of faith and worship towards unity in Christ. I vividly recall the TV images of Benedict XVI's visit to Westminster Abbey on September 17, 2010. A verger led representatives from different Christian denominations to the altar, while another verger preceded the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rome in the nave as the choir sang a solemn entrance hymn. It was a powerful image of Church unity.

There is no doubt that the greatness of this mystery allows us all to dream of a new day, a new morning for the entire church. A day when we can celebrate the Eucharist together as one family in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. This shared faith and hope also enable a Christian brother from Italy to share his humble meditation on a seemingly minor liturgical service in the Church of England.

Dr. Andrea Vitali

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



**Monday 5 until
Thursday 8 August 2024**

Annual Retreat and Training Conference



**Monday 4 until Thursday
7 August 2025**

Annual Retreat and Training Conference



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 Minister 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.



There is a possible Festival Lite to be held at St George's Chapel, Windsor in October 2024. More details to follow.

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

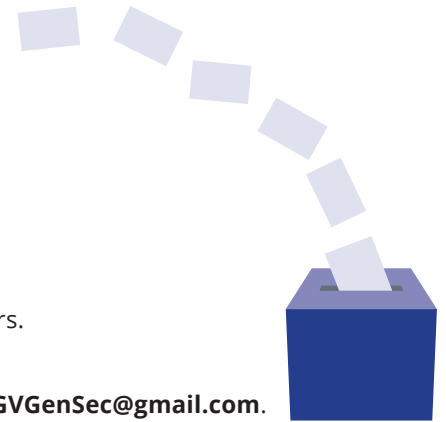


Forthcoming Elections

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

- National Chairman This is a three-year appointment open to all Full members.
- General Secretary. This is a five-year appointment open to all members.
- Training Officer. This is a three-year appointment open to all Full members.
- Overseas Membership Officer. This is a three-year appointment open to all members.
- Media Officer. This is a three-year appointment open to all members.

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



Conference Reminder

To take advantage of the Earlybird you need to have paid 50% by 31 January 2024

Book now!

Oxford Branch

Molly Payne, Branch Vice Chairman and Correspondent, writes... The Oxford Branch of the Guild of Vergers held their second Quiet Day of 2023 at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton on Tuesday, 12 September attended by fourteen members and friends. As usual, on arrival we met in the Refectory for a welcome cup of tea or coffee before moving on to the room which was to be our base for the rest of the day. Michael Golby, our Chairman, started the proceedings with a few words of welcome followed by prayers led by our Chaplain, the Rev'd Marie Jackson.

Heather Searle then led our thoughts into ways in which we could use meditation to help us to get closer to God. One suggestion was to imagine Jesus inviting us into a beautiful garden where He is standing and telling us that He is with us always. We were then asked to think about what this meant to us. Free time followed the talk before joining the Brothers in the Chapel for their noonday

service and then going to the Refectory for a tasty lunch which had been cooked for us all. After lunch, there was a short meeting for members of the Management Team and then we assembled in the Chapel of St Mary, in the Abbey grounds where we celebrated a service of Holy Communion led by our Chaplain, the

Rev'd Marie Jackson assisted by Heather Searle.

It was then time to go back to the room for a photograph and to collect our belongings before saying our 'Good-byes' and departing for home.



Leicester, Peterborough with Derby Branch

Les Mitchelmore writes... The Leicester, Peterborough with Derby branch has been very active during the year with a full programme of six meetings, which included our usual two year retention of services around our parishes, interspersed with a boat trip, our annual meal and the highlight being a meeting with our Bishop Martyn Snow which enabled him to thank members for their service and ministry to their parishes which often gets missed when visiting parishes for services.

In September our last meeting of the year before the winter break we had a great evening at St Mary's Church Anstey when we welcomed a new member Paula Hayward who replaces Val Evans who has retired after many years' service to the parish.

This was very well supported by the congregation. Following the order of service on the screen we were very impressed to see that the vicar had included the Guild Badge at the point of admission. As Branch Chair I then had the privilege of admitting Pauline to the Guild, our chaplain the Rev'd Arthur Degan led the prayers.



Not one new member but two as at Peterborough Cathedral we welcome Malcolm Hopkins to the verger team and look forward to his admission in the new year and extend an invitation to the regional branches to join us for Evensong. More details later...

York Branch

Ben Elliott-Hill, Northern Province deputy Regional Representative, writes... Since the Ebor Festival at Sheffield Cathedral there have been two meetings.

The first meeting took place at one of the mostly north westerly outposts of the Diocese of York back on the 10 July at our Branch Chair's (Su Graves) local parish church at Romaldekirk near Barnard Castle (not an easy place to get to especially if you don't drive. However, for those who like a challenge, it is doable!). We had a short time in the parish church including a Communion service led by the vicar, the Reverend Canon David Tomlinson. Lunch was provided by parishioners at the Village Hall, a last minute change due to



the unseasonable weather and a funeral taking place a short time after our visit.

The second meeting, on the 2 October, took place in York. Our usual venue of Holy Trinity, Micklegate had been closed since their verger had been made redundant (the church has since been reopened). Our venue was St Olave, which was fortunate as they were having some work done. Su, our Chair, was absent owing to illness, so the meeting was taken by our Chaplain, the Rev'd Marian Gardner. At this meeting it was announced that we needed a new Branch Secretary, although no offers were forthcoming. A new member, Susie Bell-Proctor, from the Leeds area, was admitted and then Rev'd Marian led Holy Communion. Lunch took place at a nearby Pizza Express as our Treasurer had spotted that they had a lunchtime special menu (well so we thought. We got there eventually). We were joined by some members of staff from Ripon Cathedral who had been visiting York at the same time.

Our next meeting will be our Christmas meeting on Monday 4 December. Again, we will meet at St Olave, York followed by Christmas lunch at the Whippet Inn, near All Saints North Street.

East Anglia Branch

Nanette Blackmore, Verger at St Mary the Virgin, Linton, Cambridgeshire writes... Our day started at 12.30pm on 16 October with a simple service followed by a bring and share lunch.



Our meeting was headed by our Branch Chairman and the Guild's General Secretary, Stephen Stokes, who is standing as our Chairman until a new chairman comes forward. When all was concluded, we were given a brief history of St Mary's Church Bucklesham by Roy Tricker B.E.M. (Licensed Reader and Emeritus Lay Canon).

Well, what can I say, Roy stood in the pulpit stating that someone said it was a church of no significance and only the font was worth mentioning. I am in no doubt that as soon as Roy heard that it was all systems go to put it right.

Roy is a man who knows the bones and innards of every church in East Anglia and beyond. He can remember from a very young age his love of churches and would at any chance go with family members or clergy to fire up his love and knowledge.



There was a church on this site at Bucklesham which was mentioned when the Domesday Book of 1086 was compiled; this may have been a simple wooden building and from 1100 a new church was built of flint rubble.

Having left the pulpit he went down on his knees showing us the octagonal font and we were out of our pews and craning our necks to see three lions (and remains of a fourth) all with different hairy manes. At the top of the stem is a band of carved flowers, above which eight angels, with outstretched wings support the bowl. Unfortunately, the Puritans in the 1640's rid our churches of carvings and the heads of the four evangelists were defaced. A fragment of stone from the corner of this font (discovered in the Rectory stables in 1924) is preserved in the church.

Like a spring chicken, he was bounding up the steps of the pulpit explaining the changes and add ons and in 1878 the building had been extended southwards with the organ chamber and south aisle. Roy remembers that as a boy of

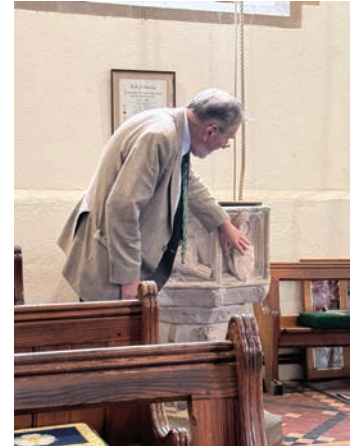
thirteen, being asked to play the organ on Easter Day as his love of organs, bells and churches continued.

If you visit this dear little church you will find two mediaeval doors set within arches of the early 1300's and the Holy Water Stoup in the north wall. On the south porch door hangs the original closing-ring and iron. It was by claspung this ring that any fugitives could claim the Right of Sanctuary.

The pulpit itself with its beautifully-carved openwork tracery has foliage designs around it and at the same side is the Vestry, this Vestry blends in so well with the exterior you would never know it was built in 1935.

I could continue, but why not visit this lovely little church and see for yourself, and you might meet the exuberant, exciting and wonderful man, Roy Tricker.

We thank the Churchwardens and Roy for hosting us this day.



St Albans Branch

Jenny Huskisson writes... On a lovely bright Autumn morning at the end of October members of the St Albans Branch walked up the hill to pay a visit to the cathedral church of St Albans. There we were met by one of our newest members, one of the vergers of the Abbey, and given a talk about the differences between the work of vergers at the Abbey to those of a parish church. We were shown a number of the verges, from the large ornate silver Bishop's Virge to the much smaller wooden verge which was surprisingly heavy.



We then had a guided tour which ended at the Shrine of St Alban in time for us to join the noon day Eucharist there. There was definitely something special about gathering around the shrine to take communion.

Tables had been reserved for us at the Abbey Kitchen Café to have lunch.

We are hoping to arrange a programme of visits to all our members "home" churches over the next few years. Our next one being St Andrews Church Bedford next September.

William (Bill) Pearce 6 March 1929 – 22 October 2023

Bill became a member of the Oxford Branch of the Guild in 2012 having spent much of his life (together with his Wife, June (who died in 2019)), serving in various roles at the Church of St. John the Baptist, The Lee, in the Deanery of Wendover, Buckinghamshire. His knowledge of local history and of the church, were second to none and on those occasions when visits by the Branch took place there, he was able to relate many a tale of bygone days.

In 2020/1, due to health and mobility issues, he 'retired' from his role as the verger at St. John's, vacated his family home in Chesham, and went to live with his daughter and son-in-law, in Norfolk and it was here that he died. He remained a proud member of the Guild and appreciated this connection and that with our Branch, and receiving a copy of the quarterly Virger Magazine; I will miss our regular chats on the 'phone.

A service is to take place at the local church followed by cremation and thereafter, his ashes will be taken to the church in The Lee and placed next to those of June.

Thank you, Bill, for being a supportive member of the Guild and our Oxford Branch family. You and your family are in our prayers.

Michael Golby, FCEGV
Chairman, Oxford Branch.

Christine Mary McLaren

4 December 1931 – 24 September 2023



Christine was born on the 4th of December 1931 in Bingley, West Yorkshire. Her father was in the woollen industry and her mother was a ledger clerk in a Building Society. As a child, the family moved to Pudsey near Leeds and Christine attended Pudsey Grammar School. She could have gone to university after passing her school certificate but that was not the route she chose to take. At school she excelled in music and English and she maintained a passion for these subjects for the rest of her life. She was an accomplished pianist, singer and sometime organist when the need often arose!

On leaving school at 16 Christine was offered a job at Martin's Bank in Bradford as a switchboard operator, later graduating to a cashier. She loved the bank and friends she made whilst working there remained friends for the rest of her life. The family moved again to Shipley, her father still in the wool industry and her mother working at the new headquarters of the Bradford & Bingley Building Society just down the road in Bingley. She started attending St Paul's Church and became very interested in the young crucifer who she found out was referred to as "Willie Mac"! One thing led to another, and they started walking out together. During their conversations she found out that "Willie Mac" felt called to the ministry and also hated the name "Willie"

so to Christine he became "Mac" and she called him that for the rest of his life. Many of you, of course, will remember referring to "Father Bill" as the Guild National Chaplain, rather than "Willie Mac".

After a bit of an on-off relationship they decided to go to the pictures one evening to have a chat and see where things were heading, only to find that all the picture houses had closed as a mark of respect for the death of King George VI. Instead, they went for a long walk round Northcliffe Woods in Shipley and during that walk they decided to get married. Bill had been accepted for Theological training but under the regulations of the college he couldn't get married during his training but there was nothing in the rules about being already married so they arranged the wedding at short notice and were married at St Paul's Church, Shipley on Boxing Day 1953.

Early in 1954 Bill went off to Theological College and shortly afterwards Christine found she was pregnant with their first son, John. Christine had left her job at the bank and was living back with her mother and father in Shipley. Bill completed his training at Edinburgh Theological College and returned to Yorkshire to become curate at Holy Trinity Church, Skipton in 1956. Christine threw herself into being a clergy wife and mother and supporting Bill in his ministry to the best of her ability. Another arrival in the family – Susan was welcomed into the family and Christine was able to push her round Skipton and show her off!

After four happy years in Skipton, Bill was offered the living of Holy Trinity Bingley and so in 1960 the family moved to Bingley where again. Christine supported Bill in his ministry and became a loyal and active member of the Mother's Union. Yet another addition to the family arrived in the shape of Andrew and now the family was complete. In 1965 the Bishop of Bradford asked Bill if he would take on the parish of St Peter's, Allerton – a suburb of Bradford – and so the family moved again. This time

from a rural parish to a suburban parish. Again, Christine supported Bill and became a stalwart member of St Peter's Mothers Union.

As Bill had trained in Scotland he'd always hankered after serving in the Episcopal Church of Scotland and so in 1968 the family upped sticks yet again and headed for St Mary's Church Carden Place in Aberdeen – the Granite City! The choir there was mixed and so Christine was able to sing at services alongside John, Susan and Andrew who also sang in the choir. Christine became adept at hosting parties of which there were many at the rectory and again became a valued member of the mother's union branch. She also joined the Aberdeen Opera Company and the Gilbert and Sullivan company alongside her many other activities associate with the parish. Christine had learned to drive in Allerton - something Bill never managed to master - and St Mary's provided the rector with a car as part of the remuneration package. This allowed the family to take trips to Royal Deeside and holidays in the Highlands and other local places of interest. It also enabled us to drive back to Yorkshire once a year to visit family and friends. Whilst we were in Scotland, Christine's mother died suddenly leaving her father a widower, so the family moved back to Yorkshire to be closer to her father and Bill became vicar of St Augustine's Newland in Hull. As ever, Christine supported Bill in his ministry and again became a stalwart member of St Augustine's Newland branch of the Mother's Union. Shortly after Bill arrived, it became evident that St Augustine's was in a poor structural state and eventually had to be closed and subsequently demolished. Ironically, a few years after Bill had left Holy Trinity Bingley, that too was found to be structurally unsound and was demolished. The Parish Church was transferred to St Cuthbert's – the daughter church – where the family spent many happy years. It was at St Cuthbert's that Bill become involved with the Church of England Guild of Vergers, eventually, of course, becoming National Chaplain.

After John and Susan got married and left home Bill had a hankering to become the vicar of a large rural parish which he felt would be a fitting swansong to his ministry. St Augustine's Hedon fitted the bill and so in 1981 Christine, Bill and Andrew moved to Hedon and yet again Christine supported Bill in his work and all the various church activities – Bill eventually becoming Rural Dean of South Holderness.

Christine became interested in local politics after accompanying Bill to various functions in connection with his duties as chaplain to the Mayor of Hedon. Eventually, she stood for election as a local councillor and was duly elected as a councillor. A couple of years later she was elected as Mayor of Hedon, with Bill as her Mayoress, a matter that caused some mirth among the junior Church choristers at the time!

After thirteen happy years at Hedon, Bill felt it was time to retire and so they said farewell to Hedon and moved seven miles east to the village of Keyingham. Bill's work with the Guild continued, attending conferences and rallies throughout the country accompanied by Christine, who eventually became an associate member of the Guild and a member of the York Branch, an association she was proud to maintain up to her death. Christine proudly accompanied Bill to Buckingham Palace when he was awarded the OBE for services to the Guild and the Church of England.

After many years of loyal service, as a retirement gift the Guild bought them a cruise on the P&O cruise ship *Oriana*, which they thoroughly enjoyed and was the start of Christine becoming an inveterate cruiser with Bill, continuing after Bill's death with her daughter Susan right up until last year.

Retirement in Keyingham didn't mean any reduction in Christine's pace of life. She joined the church choir and quite often played for services both at Keyingham and other churches throughout the Deanery. She also took several computer courses including Word Processing, Spreadsheets and Powerpoint, which for a 60+ year-old was quite something.

After a short illness, Bill died in 2006 leaving Christine a widow. This didn't slow her down to any degree and in fact she took on even more. She joined the Deanery choir and Withernsea Ladies' choir and was still singing in concerts as a 90-year-old. Eventually though, age catches up with us all and Christine had a severe stroke in April 2023. Despite the care she got in Hull Royal Infirmary and at the Tamarix Lodge in Withernsea, she slipped peacefully away on the 24th of September.

I first met Christine at St Augustine's, Hedon, when as a seven year-old in 1982 I started to attend Sunday School and had an interest in joining the Church Choir. Christine lead the junior choir of trebles and sopranos, and after being first turned down, I eventually joined and remained a member until I left Hedon in 2007. My friendship with both Bill and Christine developed after they retired, when I became a frequent visitor to 'Kirklea', their new home in Keyingham, and Bill encouraged me to join the Guild, where I initially began to serve as the legal advisor to the Central Council after my qualification in 1999. The three of us would regularly attend events, a stand-out one being the Millennium Rally organised by the late David Dorey at Westminster Abbey in July 2000. Christine had prepared and kept an album of photographs from that day, which

I have now been given, including pictures from the Abbey, the visit to Westminster Cathedral in the afternoon, and the evening 'Black Tie' dinner at St Catherine's Wharf, along with the Australia Day service the following day, attended by the late HM Queen Elizabeth. These were days to remember and the memories come flooding back each time I use the specially produced Guild tea-towel!

Christine was actively involved with the York Branch until her death and would, when she could, attend the Christmas dinner each year. She always supported Bill in his role as National Chaplain, and often attended the annual Conference.

Some of my happiest memories of both Bill and Christine involve food and drink consumed at various places across the country, but most memorably at Kirklea. Christine was a wonderful cook and I would regularly dine with them, where on a particularly special occasion, Christine would prepare her signature accompaniment of potato soufflé, which she knew was one of my favourites! After dinner, port and cigars would usually appear, and while Bill and I stayed for some hours in the dining room putting the world to rights over a bottle of port and cigars, Christine would play the piano as wonderfully as ever, with Chopin featuring regularly, being her preferred composer.

Christine had a long and happy life, three wonderful children, and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is now at peace and reunited with Bill, and will be greatly missed by many.

At her funeral on 19 October 2023, a number of Vergers attended in their robes to mark Christine's passing. John McLaren wishes to pass on his thanks and appreciation to all those who attended and who made the Church more colourful.

May Christine rest in peace and rise in glory.

Timothy Wigglesworth FCEGV
With thanks to John McLaren for the background information relating to Christine's earlier life.



Kneeler created by Christine as part of the renewal project in the church, placed by the organ that she used to play.



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The Guild Prayer

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



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