

Guild meeting 8 May 2025

Volunteers report *Sarah Friswell*

Things are rather slow in the area of volunteer recruitment at the moment. Having recently attended a training course on using Volunteer Suffolk's volunteer recruitment website, I will make use of this to try and attract new volunteers.

The Association of English Cathedrals has launched a 'Volunteer of the Year' award with categories for individuals and groups. This is the first year of what will become an annual award. The shortlisted volunteers will be showcased on social media during National Volunteers Week (2-8 June) and the winners will be announced at the end of that week. This is a great initiative to showcase the huge impact that volunteers make to the lives of cathedrals up and down the country. Our nominations are Stewart Alderman and the Gardening team.

LEGO *Sarah Friswell*

To link with the 20th anniversary of the completion of the tower, the LEGO team is currently building the tower in LEGO bricks. To encourage this to grow over this summer, a special two bricks for the price of one is being promoted. Once the tower section is built, we will revert to the usual £1 per brick. There are a tantalisingly few sections left to complete. This month marks 9 years of building and we hope to complete it on or around the 10-year mark.

Event	Stewards	<i>James</i>	<i>Stark</i>
A few concerts, such as Britten Sinfonia; Radiohead, Whitney, Beatles by Candlelight; London Film Orchestra; And event wise, Silent Disco.			

We are 24 stewards strong (figures correct as of 30/04/25). Hoping to arrange a meet-up in the summer to look ahead to the second half of the year.

Vergers *James Stark*

3 Honorary Vergers. Grateful to all three of them, especially Paul who has been able to help cover the rota on some Sundays.

Busy Easter for the team, but successful, I think. Bit of quiet time after Easter and two weeks or so, before back into the swing with Events and Services.

Welcomers Report *Jill de Laat*

There are currently 34 welcomers. Even so, it is increasingly difficult to fill the rota. This month we have 15 vacant slots, not including the seasonal 4-5.30 shifts which started this month. It may be more difficult during the summer months as holidays kick in. It is somewhat eased when the Welcome Assistants can assist in clicking in the number of visitors. Also, some Welcomers are happy to stay on past their shift end.

Otherwise, it is business as usual but a few more volunteers would be welcome if they can be found.

Wardens *Terry and Barbara*

Since January there has barely been what the warden team would describe as a “normal” Sunday, as special Eucharists and Evensongs have included the retirement of the Bishop at Candlemas and the Commissioning of Bishop Graeme, who has guided us through Lent, Holy Week, a beautiful dawn Easter Celebration and our recent Diocesan Confirmation service.

We are always grateful for the support of the vergers, with whom we manage any reserved seating, accessibility needs and safeguarding, particularly in large services.

Guides *Tessa Bailey*

Guided Tours for the Cathedral Floor and Cathedral Tower have commenced in April, following the October to April break. It is too early to make comments on numbers.

Between October and March, we offered Tower Tours over Christmas and the New Year, plus some private and Parish group tours.

We have introduced feedback cards, for tour participants, which are collected via the suggestion box, at the entry to the cathedral; or completed later online. Feedback has been excellent so far.

We are still investigating offering themed tours, i.e. on a theme like our stained-glass windows, and maybe also offering a tour and refreshments, Tour and Tea perhaps?

The Annual Report has now been sent out to all Guides.

Gardeners *Robert Bourne*

The Cathedral Gardeners have continued to meet every Tuesday morning, except that on one occasion recently they were rained off, for the first time for several years. Otherwise, the generally dry weather and early spring have resulted in the borders, planters and lawns being in good heart at this stage of the year.

In anticipation of the upcoming archaeological dig outside the cathedral office, the planters in that area have been moved on a permanent basis to the area outside Pilgrims’ Kitchen. At the request of the Council, a considerable quantity of ivy has been cleared from the boundary with the Abbey Gardens behind the toolsheds. This has opened up a view into that part of the Abbey Gardens, although this is expected to be blocked by the large compost collection bins which the Council propose to form on their side of that boundary.

As last year, tobacco plants, rudbeckias and geraniums are being planted in the borders, with begonias and geraniums outside Pilgrims’ Kitchen. Also, as was done last year, the Gardeners will observe a “no-mow” May.

Library *Stephen Dart*

The exhibition ‘Inspired in the Library’ continues to attract much interest and was visited by 20 art students from West Suffolk College, with their teacher. They also visited the library.

Another student from Abbeygate Sixth Form came to look at dragons and border decorations. We have had quite a few international visitors – from Kevelaer, Sweden and the United States. People are now using the website more frequently to request to see specific books – 2 American professors came to look at Maths and Science and a post-graduate student from St Andrew's, who is updating our entry in the Universal Short Title Catalogue, spent a whole day with us. It was a pleasure to welcome the new Canon Theologian, Vicky Johnson, to the library and Jill de Laat as a member of the library committee.

The framed photographs of the clergy have returned from the conservator. The plans and photographs we hold have been used extensively by the consultants for the project 'Abbey of St Edmund Re-born' and for the exhibition to celebrate the 20th anniversary of tower.

Chaplains *Georgina Pinches*

The chaplains continue to fulfil their duties from March to December. We have lost several volunteers for assorted personal reasons, but we continue to provide what cover we can. Prayers are still said at 12 and 3pm and those who stop and listen tell us it is appreciated. Conversations are had regularly, and it is a privilege to hear people's stories as they come into the cathedral. The Christmas fair again proved to be a good opportunity to mix with visitors and stallholders alike and just to loiter with intent as chaplains do! Many thanks to those retired friends who engage in this ministry. We look forward to another good year.

Bell Ringers *Joan Garrett*

The first few months of the year have been busy with organising ringing on Sunday afternoons to mark Plough Sunday, the Justices Service, to say farewell to Bishop Martin and then welcome the Acting Bishop Graeme Knowles. Canon Lawrence Pizzey' finally retired from Cathedral work, but as a very accomplished ringer himself and member of the Cathedral band of ringers we will continue to keep in touch with him.

Later this month we congratulate Sarah-Jane on her marriage and will be ringing the bells for her. We will also be ringing to welcome our new Canon Precentor on June 1st.

Finally, if you know of anyone who would like to find out more about bellringing and is considering learning to ring get in touch with me for further information.

St Edmundsbury Singers *Georgia Small*

The St Edmundsbury Singers continue to meet regularly for practice on alternate Thursday evenings, although January allowed a slight rest from this pattern for a few weeks, enabling some well-earned winter nights in, after a very busy Christmas period. After a much-enjoyed social get together in January, whilst supporting the new Italian restaurant across the way, our ladies felt suitably connected and ready to start singing for the new year ahead. And it was Benjamin Britten who featured strongly at the start to the new year! 'A Ceremony of Carols' was very much appreciated by all who were able to attend at 5pm on 26th January. Approximately twenty of our singing ladies gathered around the harp to deliver a well-

rehearsed (and further refined for 2025) offering of this work, being “a brilliantly conceived and dramatic concert work”. The relatively short performance ultimately left its audience in a sense of peaceful sublimity as the choir members took their processional exit, through the Quire, singing the chant of unaccompanied plainsong. If this developing pattern of Britten continues, then: here’s to the same again next year! Please! In addition to this, Britten sprung up again like a flower for Evensong on Wednesday 12th February, when the St Edmundsbury Singers sang his well-known Anthem: ‘There is no Rose’. Mothering Sunday at the close of March brought another English must-have, in John Rutter’s version: ‘For the Beauty of the Earth’ which was received with joy in the thoughtful way in which it was offered at our well-attended Evensong service. With Evensong continuing to feature as one of our consistent offerings throughout the year, how very joyful it was to support accordingly, for the celebratory occasion of the commissioning of our Acting Bishop Graeme Knowles on Sunday 2nd March; this service was arranged suitably with a majestic and ceremonial tone dominating the air, especially with the gift of ‘Marche Pontificale’ (Symphony no.1) by Widor. Equally, when life throws its challenges, the St Edmundsbury Singers step up to serve. Sadly, one of our members – Liz Wright – lost her husband, Brian, earlier in the year. The choir proved a great support, and – with Richard at the Lead – we ensured to gather as many as possible around Liz herself, to sing together at Brian’s farewell service on 14th March; it was a truly fitting memorial, headed by Canon Matthew Vernon. This was absolute witness to the reality of how such a purposeful music group may serve not only the wider community of congregation, but also its very own members – each other – with such compassionate respect at the difficult times. Easter at St Ed’s was busy, and it was The St Edmundsbury Singers who were amongst the first off the starting point on Easter Sunday morning at 6am, assembling with Adults of the Cathedral Choir for the Easter Vigil at dawn... (and this was after a 05:40 rehearsal, might I add!) They earned themselves a well-deserved breakfast in PK’s to follow, which leant itself as another opportunity of socialising and storytelling on this special day...serving to strengthen the growing connections amongst our ladies, proving especially wholesome for our most recent newcomers to the fold. Looking ahead, the Choir members are delighted to learn of extra planned outings on the horizon, starting with a concert pencilled in for a 2025 summertime ensemble, in our very own cathedral. Furthermore, there is talk of a UK-based trip further afield for 2026! This news has been welcomed with many smiles amongst our ladies. This report comes with huge thanks, as always, to our committed Chief, Richard Cook, and to our Director of Music, Claudia Grinnell; both of whom clearly listen to our needs, and offer first-class opportunities to help us serve our Cathedral community (and beyond) to the best we can.

FLOWER ARRANGERS *Sue Cockram*

After 6 weeks of Lent, we were glad to be back arranging flowers for Eastertide. We are delighted to welcome a new arranger from Chevington and a new waterer – so our team is growing slowly – always looking out for recruits! We have been given 10 beautiful wood crosses, by an anonymous donor, for use during Holy Week and Easter. Each one is made

from a different wood chosen from local trees but one comes from Windsor Great Park. Simply, elegant and already much admired. We have a busy few months ahead with the installation of our new Precentor, the 20th Anniversary of the Tower and several weddings so secateurs, flowers and greenery to the fore!

SHOP *Jane Harrison*

A late Easter proved to be fruitful for the shop with sales exceeding our target, lots of gifts and decorations were purchased as we benefited from the extra weeks to sell our Easter stock. Easter has also marked the start of the tourist season for the TIP with an increase in the number of tourists visiting us from further afield. Day coach trips have also started along with visiting choirs which have always proved lucrative for us.

We have reduced the price of the large cathedral guidebook as well as the short guide, to reduce stock ready for the updated version of the larger guide. We have decided not to completely redo the guide at this time, due to the costs involved but also due to the number of planned changes ahead as part of the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project. The updated guide will have the same cover but has several new images inside such as the nave with the new chairs.

The shop has seen two staff changes over the last couple of months. Michael Jack has left to begin an Open University History course, but you will still bump into him around the Cathedral as he continues as a guide, and he has also taken up the position of Welcome Assistant. We are pleased to be joined by Dawn Parnell as our newest member of the team – do pop in to introduce yourself if you are passing. Thank you to all our volunteers who work hard to make the shop and TIP a success and an enjoyable place to visit and work.

LEARNING HUB *Kim Judge*

Our school visits for 2025 began in February and the Learning Hub team have to date welcomed and worked with 344 children from nursery and reception through to Year 6. We have run various programmes with the schools depending on their curriculum learning requirements.

We also ran two mornings of Family Activities during February half-time with the theme of Outer Space and a total of 101 children crafts on the Nave Pavement. The team also supported Messy Easter during Holy Week with 20 children attending. Coming up we have more school visits and Family Activities as well as a couple of late afternoon Beaver group visits.

Despite still having the challenge of a small team of volunteers we are resourcing all the requested bookings and working with the available slots in the Cathedral diary. Sometimes this means being creative with the space and the logistics of moving often large groups of children around. Many thanks are due to the volunteers whose willingness and dedication means this important work continues.

KAGERA *Valerie Moore*

Judy Chisman and I spent a month in Kagera earlier this year. We were delighted to see how much development there has been in many areas. The new cathedral being built now has windows and doors, and walls to a second storey level. This has been made possible by the donation of £10k from our Diocese including £3k from our Cathedral. This has been a spur for local fund raising in their own Diocese. The Church and Community Mobilization Project has promoted the growth of avocados and is experimenting with new crops to adapt to climate change. They now have piggy banks which are thriving.

The Theological College now has milling machines which are a community asset and fund raiser as well as being used for their own crops.

We saw how the water storage tanks are built to provide much needed access to clean water for vulnerable

families as well as the hospital and Diocesan offices. Our fundraising for this has reached almost £800.

The group of ladies who make goods which are sold here at monthly sales and at the Christmas Fair welcomed us to their homes, showing us their traditional skills and range of products.

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE *Valerie Moore*

The team continues to provide fair trade coffee and tea after the 9am and 10.30am services. We offer regular and decaf types of tea and now include gluten-free biscuits. The number of people in the team has remained stable. People are always ready to fill in gaps on the rota for people who are on holiday or ill. We have been pleased to be able to help cater for people who are celebrating major events which have in the last month included a wedding cake for a platinum anniversary and Bulgarian Easter biscuits.