



# THE KING'S CHAPEL *of the SAVOY*



Newsletter 2024

## Welcome from the Chaplain



*The Reverend Canon Thomas Woodhouse.*

In 2011, Queen Elizabeth wrote of 'our enduring thanks' to the people of my former parish of Royal Wootton Bassett on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters Patent making it a 'Royal town'. The use of the word 'our' was an expression of the whole nation's thanks. Between 2007 and 2011, the repatriated bodies of British service personnel were returned with full military honours to RAF Lyneham and each time the cortege passed through the town of Wootton Bassett, the townsfolk turned out in their hundreds to pay their respects.

Offering thanksgiving or showing our or showing our gratitude opens us up to one another; these are the acts of kindness and generosity that build community. So, we should not be surprised that they have become the early hallmarks of The King's reign. What is monarchy without the person who serves as figurehead and provides us with a single point of focus? Monarchy is never abstract, it is about a person, which is why we have such affection for the person of the Sovereign and the Royal Family.

The coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla was the dedication of the Sovereign before God and, as such, it was rich in symbolism and majesty. It

was also deeply humbling, highlighting the sacrificial nature of the role that the Monarch must adopt in the service of the nation. For their Majesties, that service extends to embrace the whole Commonwealth. An amazing 2.6 billion people call this unique community of nations home and it is a community which is particularly dear to us here, given our role as the Chapel of the Royal Victorian Order.

Each year, when preparing my contribution to this newsletter, I take as my inspiration the Sovereign's Commonwealth Message which, combined with the Commonwealth Day

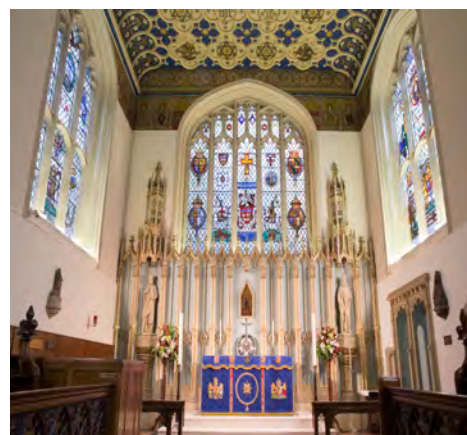


*Their Majesties, King Charles and Queen Camilla*

Service, is a celebration of place, faith and people.

In His first Commonwealth Day message since the accession, The King said: *"The Commonwealth has been a constant in my own life, and yet its diversity continues to amaze and inspire me. Its near-boundless potential as a force for good in the world demands our highest ambition; its sheer scale challenges us to unite and be bold."*

The 2023 Commonwealth Message coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Charter of the Commonwealth. This sets out the values and aspirations which unite the Commonwealth: peace and justice; tolerance, respect and solidarity; care for our environment, and for the most vulnerable in society. In the



same message, The King added: *"In this we are blessed with the ingenuity and imagination of a third of the world's population, including one and a half billion people under the age of thirty. Our shared humanity contains such precious diversity of thought, culture, tradition and experience. This extraordinary potential, which we hold in common, is more than equal to the challenges we face."*

His Majesty reminds us of our vocation to go beyond the immediately visible. He implores us to reconnect human society to the wider creation from which we risk fatal alienation. He does this partially through the dignity of His office, but also through His personality and passions, deployed at the service of His people, and at the service of the Lord of Creation.

The 1953 coronation took place against a backdrop of rising optimism as the world emerged from the shadows of war. Today, the enormous breadth and scale of the challenges facing many of us in our day-to-day lives can seem overwhelming and the mood less hopeful. We are therefore particularly grateful to the King for reminding us of the importance of giving thanks. And it is appropriate that in this Chapel, set at the heart of the Duchy of Lancaster, we continue to give thanks to God for The King's reign now begun.

*The Private Chapel of His Majesty The King in right of His Duchy of Lancaster  
Chapel of the Royal Victorian Order*

## View From The Abbey - A State Funeral And A Coronation



Precentors come and go at Westminster Abbey. We are Minor Canons and tend to keep our heads down and just get on with the work. One of the things that connects us is the responsibility for the London Bridge file, carefully handed from one precentor to the next, in the fervent hope that we will only ever have to look after it, not use it.

Being the precentor who did have to use it still takes me by surprise. Standing at the Great West Door of the Abbey as first the massed pipers and then the gun carriage swung into view was a moment

of magnificent solemnity. Reading John Donne's words 'Bring us, O Lord, at our last awakening' was a privilege beyond words.

There was, however, no file for what would follow. The Coronation preparations began within weeks of the State Funeral, and moved with great pace. Being 'given the pen', on behalf of the Abbey, for both the order of service and the ceremonial was a tremendous honour, but keeping track of every addition and change as it arose sometimes required a notebook by the bedside. Rehearsals, involving all manner of folk, from soldiers to senior peers (and above), passed like strange dreams; somewhere between Alice in Wonderland and Game of Thrones.

On one occasion the Archbishop looked over to me, smiled, and said, 'How on earth did we end up here?' It is a question that has stayed with me. As a priest, I have worked in parishes

and hospices, in special schools and Oxbridge colleges, and have been privileged to be alongside extraordinary people at significant moments in their

lives. To play some small part in this significant moment for our King, Queen, and country was never part of any plan, but the sense of privilege is similar.

I give thanks to God for the opportunity to serve, and to be made MVO is surely the choicest cherry upon the finest cake imaginable, and, where cakes are concerned, this Minor Canon's imagination knows no limits.



Mark Birch MVO  
Precentor, Westminster Abbey

## Music Fit For A King

When His Majesty asked me to help with the music for the Coronation, it was an opportunity to play a part in what would certainly be the musical event of a lifetime. The King is, of course, a lifelong devotee of classical and sacred music, with vast experience of the repertoire, singers, and musicians. As a result, with His Majesty's active engagement throughout the process, the Coronation music was very much a reflection of his wide-ranging tastes.

Of course, no Coronation could be complete without Sir Hubert Parry's spine-tingling '*I Was Glad*' or Handel's glorious '*Zadok the Priest*', and those pieces, and others from the superb history of British ceremonial music, provided the traditional framework within which the rest of the programme was assembled.

But there was also a strong desire to reflect contemporary music as a way of showcasing the nation's extraordinary musical talent. In all, counting the two hours of pre-service music, and the service itself, 12 new pieces were commissioned – more than for any previous Coronation. Five of the new compositions were by women – the first time music by female composers has



been heard at a Coronation.

The new pieces spanned a spectrum of styles from Andrew Lloyd Webber's upbeat anthem '*Make a Joyful Noise*', to the ethereal harmonies of Roxanna Panufnik and Tarik O'Regan, via the cinematic drama of Patrick Doyle's '*Coronation March*'. And for the first time ever, the Welsh language was heard in a Coronation in Paul Meallor's '*Kyrie*', delivered with earth-shaking power by the great bass baritone Sir Bryn Terfel.

At the special request of His Majesty, a choir of singers in the Greek Orthodox tradition, assembled especially for the occasion, sang a Greek psalm, while The Ascension Choir, again recruited especially for the day, performed Debbie Wiseman's Gospel-style '*Alleluia*'. Sarah Class's epic solo '*Sacred Fire*' was performed by the great South African soprano Pretty

Yende, who became the first African to perform solo at a Coronation, to the great acclaim of her home nation.

The Coronation Choir under the expert direction of Westminster Abbey's Andrew Nethsingha, and the Coronation Orchestra, under the baton of the Royal Opera House's Sir Antonio Pappano, set new standards for musical excellence – not to mention stamina – in providing an incomparable richness of sound throughout a demanding programme under the gaze of a television audience of hundreds of millions for more than four hours.

It did not feel like four hours. Even for those of us in the Abbey who had been seated long before the pre-service music began, the occasion seemed to fly by, as the Mendelssohn tune puts it, on wings of song. All who were present, or who have watched or listened to the broadcasts and recordings, could not fail but be impressed by this unforgettable demonstration of His Majesty's love of music, and the way the Coronation provided such an incomparable showcase for the musical talent of the country of which he is King.

Graham Davies, LVO



## Royal Visit to Yorkshire



We were delighted to host the first official visit of The King to His Duchy of Lancaster farming tenants this summer. His Majesty travelled to Yorkshire on the Royal Train, pulled by The Flying Scotsman. On arrival, The King was greeted by cheering crowds before moving on to a series of private meetings with farmers from across the Yorkshire Estates.



The Duke also visited Pickering Woods with Head Forester, Geraint Richards, before attending a tea reception hosted by our tenants, Joe and Debbie Green, at Fields Farm on the Cloughton Estate.



It was a hugely enjoyable day and a special moment for those tenants who hosted elements of the visit, creating memories which they and their families will treasure for many years to come.

## The Chaplain's Visits

As Chaplain for the Duchy of Lancaster, The Reverend Canon Thomas Woodhouse makes regular visits to our farming tenants, particularly those working in remote rural communities. In the last year, he has visited farming families across our Staffordshire, Lancashire and Southern Surveys. He has also met with local clergy and members of the Rural Chaplaincies in these areas to ensure that anyone in need continues

## Duchy Council Appointments

Sir James Leigh-Pemberton CVO has been appointed Chairman of the Duchy of Lancaster Council. He succeeds Sir Alan Reid GCVO who stepped down from the Council in July after five years' service as Chairman and 15 years as an ex-officio member of Council in his capacity as Keeper of the Privy Purse to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (2002 to 2017).

Sir James is a highly experienced and respected finance professional who served as Receiver General of the Duchy of Cornwall from 2000 until his retirement in 2021. A former Managing Director of Credit Suisse, he also served as Chairman of the Government-owned UK Financial Investments, and Deputy Chairman of its successor organisation, UK Government Investments, from 2013 to 2022.

We were also delighted to welcome the current Secretary of the Duchy of Cornwall, Mr Alastair Martin, and the former Senior Partner of Knight Frank, Mr Alistair Elliott, both of whom were appointed to Council at the start of the year. Alastair Martin now chairs our Rural Committee and Alistair Elliott chairs our Urban Committee.



## Restoring Our History

Our ongoing programme of works to open historic Lancaster Castle up to the public continues to prove popular, with over 200,000 visitors recorded last year. Many of these took part in a guided tour, attended events in the courtyard or at the Police Museum, watched artisans at work in the embroidery studio and stone sculptor's workshop or enjoyed refreshments in our stunning purposebuilt café.

A number of small regeneration projects are now underway which will bring more vacant areas and disused buildings back into use. These include the creation of two more workshop units, a much needed upgrade to the existing security office and additional welfare facilities. On a larger scale, essential repair works will begin later this year to make the medieval Keep wind and water-tight. This will include sensitive repairs to the fabric and windows in the building as well as a new roof and the installation of gutters and downpipes to cater for higher predicted rainfall patterns. We also hope to be able



to open up a small part of the ground and first floors of the Keep to the visiting public. All of our proposed works have been approved by Lancaster City Council and Historic England, who are supportive of our ambition to protect the Castle for future generations.



In preparation for the major works, archaeologists commenced excavation works in the summer, unearthing a small number of Roman coins (*similar to those pictured above*) under the Execution Yard in the process. Further investigation and verification of the finds are ongoing.



to receive the care and support they require. Thomas continues to accept invitations to preach in churches supported by our

tenant communities and in the summer visited three ancient Duchy livings: Clare in the diocese of St Edmundsbury and

Ipswich, Ashley in the diocese of Bristol and Poole Keynes in the diocese of Gloucester.





## The Chapel's Book of Remembrance

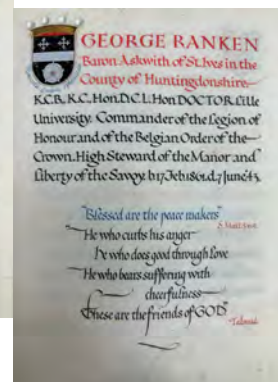
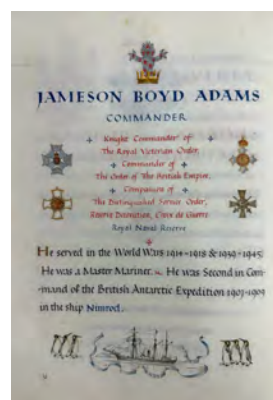
In 1951, a Book of Remembrance was established in the King's Chapel of Savoy. Its function is highlighted by the legend written on the opening page, words found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 44, verses 14 and 15: *"Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore. The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will shew forth their praise."*

The book is on permanent display in the chapel and commemorates the lives of members and medallists of the Royal Victorian Order and others who

have worshipped in the King's Chapel. It is an active archive, of historical interest and a thing of beauty.

The first entry honours the memory of George Ranken, Baron Askwith of St Ives in the County of Huntingdonshire. Lord Askwith was High Steward of the Manor and Liberty of the Savoy, a position that is now in abeyance. Entries continue to the present day.

If any member of the Order or their descendants would like to consider having an entry in the book, please write to the Chaplain.



## RNLI Tower Lifeboat Station



The RNLI's busiest lifeboat station lies on the very edge of the Manor and Precinct of the Savoy. Tower Lifeboat Station takes its name from the original RNLI lifeboat station which opened in 2002 further downstream at Tower Pier, next to the Tower of London. In 2006, the station moved to its present location at Waterloo Pier, and was formerly known as the Waterloo Police Pier.

The original lifeboat station was withdrawn from service on 13th January this year and the old station towed away to London's Royal Docks.

A new, purpose-built, floating lifeboat station was delivered to the pier at Waterloo Bridge in March 2023, having been constructed over a period of five months at the King George V Dock.

In June 2023, the Duke of Kent KG

GCVO formally opened the new station, which was also



blessed by the Chaplain.

The Duke has been President of the RNLI since 1969. He last visited Tower Lifeboat Station in 2009, when he met with some of the crew, seven years after the RNLI first established a lifeboat service on the Thames.

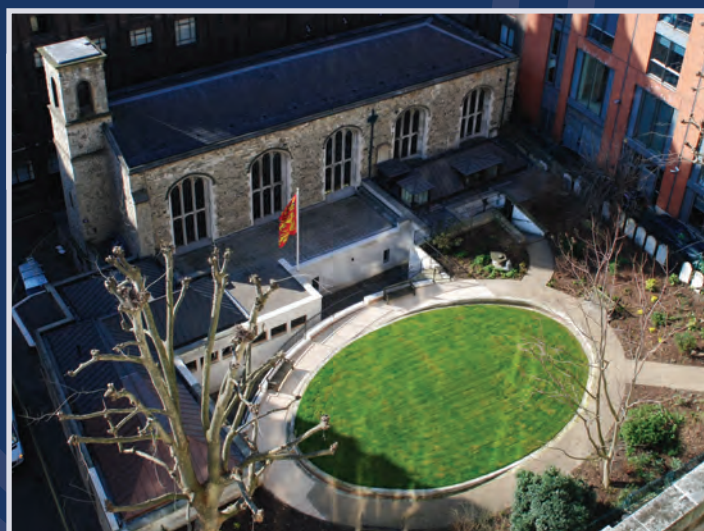
## A Place of Welcome For All

The King's Chapel of the Savoy continues to be a place of welcome and hospitality for members of the Royal Victorian Order and the Duchy of Lancaster.



The quadrennial service for the Order at St George's, Windsor was a wonderful expression of friendship and shared endeavour. During the days before and after the service we greeted friends from across the Commonwealth, all of whom enjoy visiting 'their' Chapel.

We have also played our part in a number of baptisms, weddings and memorial services again this year, the most recent of which was the baptism of Joaquín Bunbury, grandson of Sir Michael Bunbury Bt KCVO DL, former Chairman of the Duchy Council.



## The Kings' Chapel of the Savoy

Putting People at the Heart of our Christian Witness

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