



THE KING'S CHAPEL *of the SAVOY*



Newsletter 2026

Welcome from the Chaplain



The Reverend Canon Thomas Woodhouse

In His Commonwealth Day message in 2025, His Majesty the King said leaders from across the Commonwealth came together in Samoa to reaffirm their *'belief in the value of the Commonwealth as a trusted forum where diverse voices of our member states, the large and the small, the young and the old, come together as one family.'*

'These gatherings are important for helping all Commonwealth nations to tackle the challenges of the day, yet they also play another vital role. In these uncertain times, where it is all too easy to believe that our differences are problems instead of a source of strength and an opportunity for learning, the Commonwealth's remarkable collection of nations and peoples come together in the spirit of support and, crucially, friendship.'

The call to show friendship and hospitality is important and runs to the heart of what it means to be fully alive and properly attentive to one another. It is not new! Parson Woodforde (The Revd James Woodforde 1740-1803) was a Church of England priest who served in the

English counties of Somerset and Norfolk. Although he led a somewhat uneventful and unremarkable life, he did leave a diary recording 45 years of everyday routines and concerns of 18th century rural life. It is a vivid account of parish life but remained unpublished until the 20th century!

Parson Woodforde has much to teach us about rootedness and pastoral care, as can the Commonwealth through its many and varied programmes, including the Youth Council, some of whose members visited the Chapel after the Commonwealth Service. Above all, hospitality to Woodforde was vocational and theological. Living out the words of St Paul to the Romans, *With unflagging zeal, aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Let hope keep you joyful; in trouble stand firm; persist in prayers; contribute to the needs of God's people, and practise hospitality.* (Romans 12.11-13 NEB)



Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey



His Majesty The King, Sovereign of the Royal Victorian Order

There are as many expressions of hospitality as there are countries in the Commonwealth, indeed infinitely more! Each expression is unique and each deserves our respect. Here at the Chapel we work hard to live out the Scriptural imperative to practise hospitality; it has double meaning for me, for in my first career I was both a chef and a hotel manager and in my vocation food, in the form of the Holy Communion, remains central to my life.

It is our task to live up to the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ and when looking for encouragement we need look no further than the prayer for generosity of St Ignatius of Loyola which is used whenever the family of the Royal Victorian Order come together in prayer: *Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

A lifetime of Royal Service: The Extraordinary life of John Taylor RVM (Gold)

In the modern history of the Royal Household, few names inspire such warmth, respect and admiration as that of John Taylor RVM (Gold). At 94 years, and still possessed of wit, memory and quiet modesty, John is possibly the oldest living member of those who found their vocation serving the monarch in the Royal Household. His journey began when he was just three-months old and brought to Windsor.

He officially entered Royal Service in 1945, aged just 14, and what followed was a career that is best described as a masterclass in loyal, discreet and tireless service to the Crown. But John's contribution was never merely professional - it was deeply personal, etched into every step of his journey with the Royal Family, most notably with Queen Elizabeth and The Duke of Edinburgh.

After his early days assisting at Windsor and Buckingham Palace, John's career was paused by wartime conscription. Though he had hoped to join the Royal Air Force - even receiving encouragement from Sir Sydney Camm, the designer of the Hurricane fighter - fate had other ideas. Instead, he found himself in the Royal

Navy, posted near Fontainebleau in France, and later aboard *HMS Crossbow*, patrolling the Mediterranean.

Despite the detour, he would return to the Palace in 1948 as a Footman - just in time to walk beside the Coronation Coach during that famously rain-drenched procession. In 1953, John joined the Royal Tour aboard *Gothic*, a journey that spanned the globe: Jamaica, Hawaii, Fiji, the Congo, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka, and across Africa. He went on to travel extensively with The Duke of Edinburgh.

John rose to become Page of the Back Stair - the most senior private servant in the Royal Household below the Palace Steward. In that role, he was one of the few who knew the whereabouts of the Queen at all times. The Late Sir John Miller GCMG, Crown Equerry, once told him, "You're the only person who ever told me I couldn't see the Queen."

In recognition of his unwavering service, John was appointed to the Royal Victorian Order. A particularly touching gesture came in 1990, when the Queen awarded him the RVM (Gold) a full year before his retirement. "She wanted me to wear it during my retirement year." It was

a gesture that spoke volumes about her appreciation for his decades of devotion.

With 44 medals to his name - plus Jubilee, Coronation, and RVO honours - John's legacy is etched not only in medals and memories, but in the very ethos of the Household. He remains a living thread through some of the most defining decades in the modern monarchy's story.



The Reverend Canon Thomas Woodhouse with John Taylor RVM (Gold) in Windsor.



Historic royal visit to Lancashire

In June 2025, His Majesty The King, Duke of Lancaster, made his first official visit to Lancashire as Sovereign. The visit began with the traditional Ceremony of the Keys at Lancaster Castle, a custom dating back to 1851. Within the Castle grounds, His Majesty met with local schools and businesses and toured the impressive restoration works funded by charitable grants from the Duke of Lancaster's Foundation.

He then visited the Duchy's Whitewell Estate, where he discussed regenerative farming practices with tenant farmers and viewed an innovative redevelopment project transforming derelict farm buildings into modern industrial and artisan workspaces.

A Visit with Henry Gray MVO: Celebrating a Lifetime of Heraldic Artistry

As I have attested before, we are fortunate at the King's Chapel to welcome a steady flow of members of the Order throughout the year and this year has been no different! Thank you for those visits, whether on a weekday or for the Sunday morning service. If you let us know you are coming on a Sunday, we are always pleased to invite members to read the lessons; it further fixes the Order into the life of the Chapel.

As well as welcoming members, I enjoy going out and visiting members! In April I had the privilege of spending time in the company of Henry Gray MVO at his family home in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, who earlier in the year had celebrated his 90th birthday.

Henry was awarded his MVO in the honours list following the Investiture of HRH Prince Charles, Duke of Cornwall



as Prince of Wales, in recognition of his heraldic work relating to the Investiture.

Henry's interest in heraldry began at an early age, and as a twelve-year-old

schoolboy he became a founder member of the Society of Heraldic Antiquaries, later to become The Heraldry Society and he became a friend of its founder John Brooke-Little, Norroy and Ulster King of Arms.

From 1970 Henry worked for the York, Lancaster and Chester Heralds, becoming in 1981 a freelance Herald Painter, working mainly for the College of Arms. Now retired, Henry's corpus of beautiful heraldic work is testimony to a lifetime's interest in heraldry and to his talent and skill.

The Royal Victorian Order has, as many reading this will testify, the feel of a family, a family with a common goal, that of serving the Crown. And like any other family is one made up of people with gifts, skills and talents that over lifetimes have been placed at the service of the Crown and Commonwealth.

Across the Commonwealth: Canadian Members Celebrate at Windsor Castle

Since its establishment in 1896, the Royal Victorian Order has carried an international character - an enduring

legacy of the British Empire and the fifteen countries over which The King serves as Sovereign and Head of State. Members

of the Order have enjoyed a special connection with the King's Chapel of the Savoy since 1937.



Canadian RVO members at Windsor Castle

In some of His Majesty's larger realms, meetings of members and holders of the Royal Victorian Order are held. The most frequent of these gatherings takes place biennially and is organised by the Royal Victorian Order Association of Canada. Established in 2007 under the leadership of the late Dr. D. Michael Jackson, and with the support of the then Chaplain, Professor the Reverend Canon Peter Galloway, LVO, OBE, the Association today includes more than sixty members.

One of the principal activities of the Association, is organising a delegation of Canadian members of the Order to attend the quadrennial Service of Thanksgiving for Members of the Royal Victorian Order, which is held in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle under the direction of the Chaplain of the Order.

Toronto Chapel Family Receives a Royal Welcome

Last Spring, members of the Chapel Royal family from Toronto visited His Majesty's Chapel of the Savoy before attending a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. A delegation from The King's Anishinaabek Sacred Place - the Chapel Royal at Massey College in Toronto, one of Canada's three Indigenous Chapels Royal - was warmly welcomed by Canon Thomas Woodhouse at the Savoy Chapel.

The visit included a tour and brief history of the Chapel by Canon Woodhouse, and was a wonderful opportunity to recall the work of the late Dr. D. Michael Jackson CVO, founder of the Royal Victorian Order Association of Canada and longtime friend of the Chapel Royal at Massey College.

Following their time at the Savoy Chapel, the delegation was joined by Canon Paul Wright, Sub Dean of HM Chapel Royal, and presented to His Majesty The King at the Garden Party.

The delegation was also presented to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh who gifted them tobacco which had

earlier been brought to him from seeds he had planted during a visit to Canada in 2023.



Nathan Tidridge, Councillor Veronica Jamieson-King, Evan Chan, Ogiama Kwe (Chief) Claire Sault, and

Councillor Erma Ferrell stand at the altar of The King's Chapel of the Savoy with Canon Thomas Woodhouse.

The Savoy Chapel Comes to Instagram

The King's Chapel of the Savoy has embraced the 21st century and is now on Instagram! Stay connected and keep up

to date with all that's happening at the Chapel, as we continue putting people at the heart of our Christian witness.

Follow us and join our online community @savoychapel



The King's Chapel of the Savoy

Putting People at the Heart of our Christian Witness

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