

The Great Priory Cathedral Service 2017 by Em.Kt. Naunton Liles, **GOrg**

The United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem. Palestine, Rhodes and Malta for England and Wales and Provinces Overseas were well represented at Lincoln in the autumn of 2017.

My wife and I arrived in Lincoln at four on Friday 15th. I went to choral evensong and then we had quite a good dinner in the White Hart hotel where we were staying. Naturally there were lots of people we know so there was plenty of conversation.

Saturday 16th September, 2017

The White Hart is right next to the cathedral and we could hear the deep resonance of the hourly chimes from our pillow. Fortunately these were silenced overnight but the deep bell made sure we were at breakfast on time. It must have had the same effect for everyone else in the hotel as we all coincided in the breakfast room together. This led to considerable delays in getting a few rounds of toast and a cup of coffee, though I must say my Egg Benedict was cooked to perfection when it reached our table.



Those of us who were on active duty that day gathered in the cathedral for a rehearsal, or rather a walk-and-talk-through at ten o'clock. Over the next three hours I met key people such as the Director of Music, the Organist, and vergers plural. I'd been negotiating with these for several weeks but it was good to meet them face to face. The plurality of staff arises from new appointments earlier in the month. New lady Dean, new lady verger, a female Canon in Residence. The organist was a lady under thirty who had a mild north American accent and a stunning technique. She had directed the choir the previous evening when I attended Choral Evensong. Some of the former staff were assisting their successors, hence two

vergers for this big event.

There was to be an organ recital at seven on the Saturday evening so the German recitalist was practicing, and was very loud indeed. He was asked to step aside for us

so that we could hear ourselves speak and this provided the moment for me to familiarise myself with the organ.

The congregation began to arrive at about one o'clock and the knights were abundant, looking resplendent in their white regalia. The timing was neat. We were told it takes 4 minutes for the clergy and choir to process from the vestry and indeed they were stationary at the west end when the majestic cathedral bell chimed two. The introit was sung unaccompanied, and then the brass ensemble who were 500 yards away broke forth into the fanfare for '*All People that on Earth to Dwell*' and the procession moved forward smartly because the choristers needed to be in place by the third verse, which is unaccompanied except for a solo cornet which plays Ralph Vaughan-Williams' obligato over the sound of the voices. Then, the full force of congregation, choir and organ set the scene for the service by the robust singing the final verse.

This Knights Templar service had a strong South Walian influence as the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master, Paul Raymond Clement was from Swansea, the Great Prelate from Abergavenny, the Great Vice Chancellor from Miskin, and a Deputy Marshal came from Fishguard. The music included all the big Welsh hymns that are enjoyed by keen rugby supporters.

The Dean, the Very Rev'd Christine Wilson welcomed the congregation. The choir sang MacMillan's '*A New Song*' and then the Very High and Right Eminent Great Seneschal, Malcolm Ernest Slater GCT read the first lesson. We all joined in with *Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*; it really lifts the spirits when 700 in the congregation sing lustily. The second lesson was read by The Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master, Paul Raymond Clement GCT. The address was given by RE Kt The Rev Dr John Railton KCT and was followed by the choir singing a most delicate setting of *Non Nobis Domine* by Byrd.

The Precepts of the Order were read by the Great Vice Chancellor VE Kt Ryan Williams, then the choir and organ burst forth into the splendid Coronation anthem "*I was Glad...*" by Joseph Parry. (A Welsh composer.) The VE Kt. Malcolm Lane led the knights in our Recommitment to the Order after which we sang *Cwm Rhondda*. The prayers of intercession were led by the Canon in Residence, Rev. Sally McDougall.

We sang every verse of *For all the Saints* which was timed perfectly to cover the collection of alms, which were given to the Cathedral. After the Blessing and Dismissal the National Anthem made full use of the powerful organ, to accompany the congregation and choir.

When the cathedral was silent again, coaches transported 500 to a luncheon at the

Lincoln Show-ground. The brass ensemble played a selection of popular music while we foregathered for lunch and downed the Prosecco.

The food was good, the speeches brief and the rain outside was heavy. We left at seven and my wife and I paid a mere £1.50 to cross the Humber bridge so were in Cottingham by eight for a weekend with the family. A wonderful day.