

InHouse

The Journal of the Lincoln Cathedral Community Association

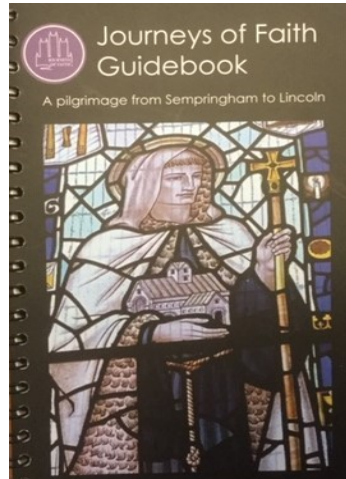
Journeys of Faith

The final *Journeys of Faith* Guidebook has recently been published and I took this opportunity to ask Alan Wilson, the driving force behind the series, to reflect on this exciting project. He explained that it all began in the Chapter House at a Harvest Supper arranged by the Cathedral Community Association in 2016.

Being new to Lincolnshire, Alan was keen to explore the local countryside and, having been involved in the establishment of a pilgrimage in Derbyshire, asked if anyone knew of a pilgrimage route to the cathedral. As there appeared to be none, he enthused about the benefits of introducing a pilgrimage that would embrace the Lincolnshire countryside, celebrate the county's history and further recognise the cathedral's importance as a place of worship and pilgrimage.

Providence dictated that sitting at his table that evening was a member of the local Ramblers Association, with years of experience walking in Lincolnshire (John Harker) and an amateur photographer with an extensive and impressive portfolio of photos (Michael Newstead). Realising there was interest in his proposal, a project plan was submitted to the cathedral in order to secure support.

Once obtained, Alan asked me to join the team as its historian and the *Journeys of Faith* project was launched. Over time, other members of the Cathedral community were invited to participate, by validating walks and producing theological content,



resulting in the publication of five pilgrimage guidebooks compiled by Alan. Little did he realise what he was letting himself in for!

The first pilgrimage began in Louth, inspired by the Lincolnshire Rising of 1536, and was followed by a second, starting in Epworth, the birthplace of the Methodist movement. As an accompaniment, an internal *Journeys of Faith* guide was published to help pilgrims engage with the spiritual life of the cathedral. A one-day pilgrimage from Navenby was next and finally one from the site of St Gilbert's monastery in Sempringham concluded the series.

All the pilgrimage routes were designed to enable pilgrims to visit a series of churches on their journey to the cathedral, so the guidebooks contain clear walking instructions and maps by John Harker, as well as historical information, points for discussion and issues to ponder along the way. Alan was keen for the pilgrimages to be enjoyed by everyone irrespective of their mode of travel, so, to emphasise this, apart from walking, the pilgrimage launches included horses, buses,

motorbikes, classic cars, bicycles, and a boat! Indeed the launches were a triumph of Alan's organisational skills as they involved not only members of our community but also many parishioners from the churches we visited along the way.

He hoped the *Journeys of Faith* pilgrimages would provide an opportunity for people to step aside from the routine business of day-to-day living, draw closer to God and reassess their lives, personal circumstances and ambitions. However, for some, particularly now after lockdown, just taking time out to enjoy our Lincolnshire landscapes and buildings in a thoughtful and reflective way should be equally rewarding.

So, six years after Alan had that first conversation at the Community Harvest Supper, five inspirational pilgrimages have helped to re-establish the cathedral as a place of pilgrimage and certainly enriched many people's lives!

Judi Jones



The Gilbert Pots in Lincoln Cathedral



In 1984, to mark the 900th anniversary of Gilbert of Sempringham's birth, an informal, quiet area for prayer and reflection, was created in the Chapel of St Katherine, at the east end of the Cathedral. The Dean and Chapter commissioned large pottery candlesticks to be made by Robin Welch, one of the most pre-eminent British potters, and to be dedicated to St Gilbert. St Gilbert was the founder of the Gilbertine Order, the only medieval English monastic order. This was a double monastic order for both men and women which existed until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, eventually having 26 priories, 11 in Lincolnshire.

Gilbert was born around 1084 into a privileged family. He was born with a deformity, possibly a twisted spine, so knighthood was barred for him and he became a teacher and then entered the priesthood here at Lincoln. The land at Sempringham, a gift from Gilbert's father, was the site of the first monastery founded by Gilbert to demonstrate his piety. The Order began with an enclosed order of seven nuns, who were joined by lay women to serve them. Lay brothers were introduced to do the rough work and later they were joined by seven Canons, who were to share Gilbert's burden of ministering to the women. These Canons were not monks, but priests who could work in parishes as well as within the Order.

The women followed the Cistercian rule whilst the men were under the rule of St Augustine.

The Gilbert Pots: The taller pots represent the men of the Order; the shorter ones are the women. Gilbert is symbolised by the somewhat squat, pock-marked warty pot, with wheels painted on it. This pot reflects the 'difference' in Gilbert, caused by his deformity. The wheels and harness represent the monastery; two sides of men and women working in harmony.

The Making of the Candles Holders: Robin Welch's pots often have a sculptural aspect to them. His work is fired repeatedly in an oil-fired kiln, producing many layers of interest, and a depth of colour to each pot. He begins with a series of bases and then throws upwards, adding hand built additions and large coils of clay as decoration. He uses a heavily 'grogged' clay to add strength and texture.

The pots are strong, stoneware pieces with each one being finished like a painting, adorned with brush strokes of slip (coloured liquid clay), glaze or enamel colour, with surfaces highlighted by smooth glazes or left matt and rugged within the same piece.

The pots have bands of impressed script around them, giving a brief description of Gilbert's work:

'The Lincolnshire Saint Gilbert of Sempringham 1082-1189 Canonised by Pope Innocent III 1202 founded in this diocese a notable order of religious living for men and women.'

The simplicity and beauty of these pots seem to convey the idea of fulfilling a task set for them in a quiet, inconspicuous way much like the life Gilbert wished to live.

Kate Hellen

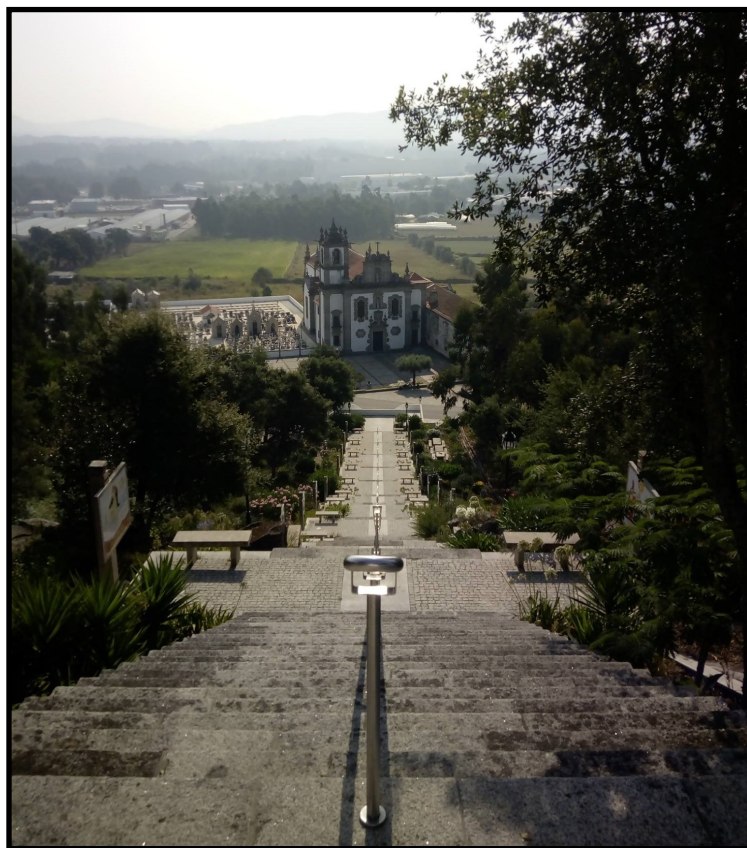
Camino de Santiago de Compostella

The Camino de Santiago, known in English as the Way of St James, is a pilgrimage to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostella in Northern Spain where the bones of St James are said to be held. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims make the journey there every year from all over the world, travelling along a series of official routes. Every pilgrim has their own story and their own reason for making the long journey, and each takes something different home with them. None make the journey unchanged.

The official routes (starting in Spain, France, Portugal, England, Ireland, etc.), guide the pilgrim with a series of yellow arrows all the way to the cathedral in Santiago. A nicer spot to finish can often be to continue on for a few more days to the coast at Finisterre, as it does not suffer under the weight of tourism and busy commercial life that Santiago does. Nevertheless, while on each official route (and with each being famous for different reasons), all are well catered for: in cheap “pilgrim hostels”, cafes with “pilgrim menus”, fresh-water taps, pharmacies and other basic amenities (some even have their own public hot-springs!).

Santiago has been a pilgrimage destination for almost a thousand years, and in the last few years has become almost as popular as it was in the Middle Ages. Lincolnshire has its own pilgrimage sites, highlighted recently by the excellent *Journeys of Faith* guidebooks. Although these sites do not yet have the fame or infrastructure that Santiago does (and few in the world do), the partaking of them nevertheless facilitates the same kind of sentiments that I have found only going on pilgrimage can.

Pilgrimage has been (and sometimes is) the visiting of individual shrines to attain the benefits bestowed through their particular patron saints or gods.



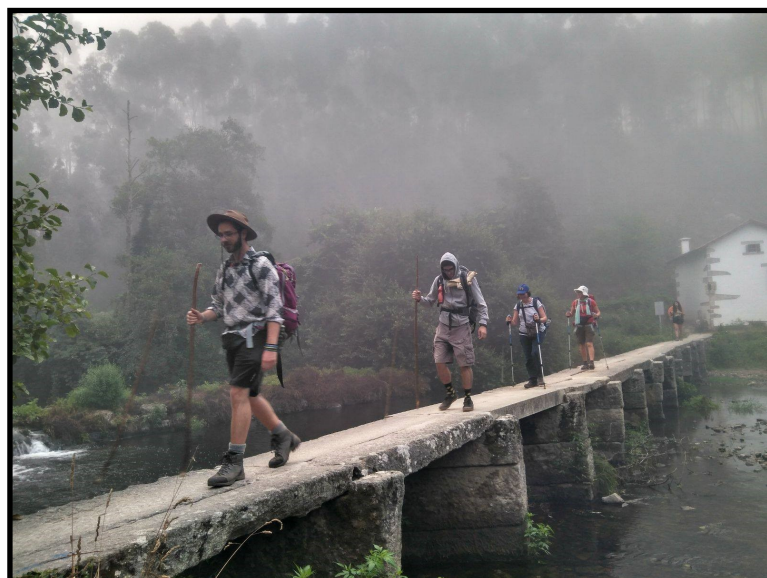
For many these days, it is also a source of adventure, of fellowship, of exercise. Yet in the silence of the walk, with the cares and worries and distractions of everyday life left behind, the Almighty becomes impossible to ignore.

On a personal note, I have made many of my dearest friends on pilgrimage. I have seen the worst and the best sides of people. I have met families, teachers, lawyers, academics, priests, ex-terrorists and those who have recently lost loved ones. I have walked with atheists, agnostics, Muslims and Christians.

I have walked by villages and forts and rivers and forests and mountains that I would never have truly appreciated, if I had not walked through them. I have never felt closer to God than when I have walked those roads.

I have found pilgrimage to be the most addictive adventure that I have ever known (one never truly “finishes” a pilgrimage). I intend to go on as many pilgrimages as I can for the rest of my life - and I would very much recommend that you try one.

Jonathan Shiell



Pentecost



As well as falling within the celebrations of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, 4th June saw the celebration of Pentecost – the culmination of the cycle of Christian feasts and festivals that have dominated our liturgical life since Advent.

The pattern of celebrations through Advent and Christmas reminds us of the creative power of a God who brings creation into being, and then enters that creation so that love may be fully known. In this we understand God as Father to be the creative power, and God as Son to be the creative 'Word' which becomes flesh and is known among us. The story continues through Epiphany as we see the signs by which Jesus was known to all people as a light – shining for all people. The tempo changes as we embark on our Lenten journey as we walk alongside Christ and, as we enter Holy Week 'take up our Cross' to walk alongside Christ to see the pain and suffering of a love that truly gives of itself in love for the world.

Easter marks the way that this love transforms darkness into light – how we are called to have a completely different perspective on what we see and how we view our world in the knowledge that creation has a beauty that is beyond our earthly comprehension.

And on Ascension Day, in knowing that Jesus is 'taken from our sight' we understand that the love that was made known from the beginning of creation calls us to look to seek the glory and beauty of heaven perfected – as we pray day-by-day, that God might be known 'on earth, as in heaven'. All our senses are drawn to perceive beyond what we find at first sight and to understand that heaven is indeed present among us.

All of this can seem somewhat distant: the creative acts of God are beyond our understanding (although scientific endeavour and artistic creativity allow us to apprehend much of the beauty that we can see in creation); and the depth of love that we find in the journey to the Cross, the transfigured wonder of the risen Christ of Easter and the heavenly glory of Ascension can dazzle us with wonder (and hopefully draw us into praise!).

With Pentecost, we encounter God in a far more personal way – the love of God touches us uniquely. We are given the gift of knowing the love of God in our own hearts: the gift of grace. As Jesus told the apostles, this gift is that of the 'comforter'; that through the love of God we may love each other and find that God's love is known among us. So, in Pentecost we find the strands of the previous months drawn together – the love of God has been made known, and is given to us as a gift. The challenge for us is to open our hearts to that gift, and let the love and grace of God shape our lives.

Rev. Nick Brown, Precentor

Thoughts from the Lay Vice Chair

As we enter the summer months, and the long weeks of "Ordinary Time" we all start to think about holidays and trips. As Chaucer says in his *Canterbury Tales* (an early copy of which is held in the Cathedral Library): "Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages". This edition of *InHouse* features a number of different approaches to Pilgrimage, including journeys in both this country and abroad and the Precentor's article reminds us of our spiritual journey along the Christian pathway which we follow each year.

This has been a very busy period for the Cathedral, as we reawaken after the lockdown period, and you can read about some of the events in these pages, including the filming of 'Napoleon' and the production of 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame'. We also welcome new members of staff and sadly say goodbye to long-standing friends who will be much missed.

Our community outing to Sempringham was an opportunity to enjoy friendship and fellowship and we look forward to arranging more outings in the future.

I would like to say a big 'thank you' to Elaine Johnson, who has masterminded this edition of *InHouse*, and to her husband, Allan, who has typeset this issue. Many thanks, too, to Chapter Clerk, Will Harrison who has been our expert typesetter for many years.

InHouse is circulated electronically via the chapter letter and the cathedral website. If you would like to join the circulation list please email lcca@lincolncathedral.com. We are pleased to report that paper copies of this issue will again shortly be available.



The LCCA is very grateful to Andrew World of Andrew World Joinery — all aspects of joinery undertaken — for sponsoring a year's editions of *InHouse* so free, printed copies can still be provided. Andrew can be contacted on 0784 157 2622.

Mary's Flowers

Our cathedral is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and in the summer we are hosting a Flower Festival in the nave so it seemed a good time to look again at the many common flowers in our fields and gardens which are traditionally associated with Mary. A quick glance at your internet will also reveal that there are some gardens both here and in America which are called 'Marian or Mary's Gardens'. I have never been to a Marian Garden but I have visited several Biblical Gardens both here and overseas and it is interesting to see how they are all organised to reflect different parts of the Christian story in design, colour and planting.

The flowers most often associated specifically with Mary are the rose – her ancient symbol and the one found here in Lincoln cathedral carvings - and the lily which has always been associated with purity both by the pristine white and the profound scent (the yellow stamens which stain clothes are ignored historically!). Lilies of the Valley are also included here. The list is endless but my own favourites are Alchemilla Mollis often called Ladies Mantle, Lady's Bedstraw, a common wayside flower, very fluffy and yellow which together with thyme are associated with the straw and sweet herbs which Mary is said to have used to lay the infant Jesus on. Ladies Smock or cuckoo flower and violets are very pretty wildflowers said to be associated with her and are also very common on verges and roadsides.

In 1988 the Lincoln Herb Society commissioned their members to create a tapestry containing 35 flowers traditionally associated with Mary. This tapestry is now part of an exhibition of Mary's Flowers which will run alongside the Flower Festival in August.

An article in 'Garden News June 1981' recorded that Mr. Cyril Rhodes of Nettleham Road Lincoln, looked after a collection of 36 plants, all associated with Mary, which were planted in small beds around the 8 Portuguese Laurels in wooden tubs which graced the colonnade on the north side of the cloister below the Wren Library.



There was also a large lead cistern which I am sure I remember overflowing with blue flowers; today that same cistern is still there, but is lurking, unloved and unlovely in a distant corner of the cloister and is now filling up with rubbish! Such a shame – it could be renovated and planted with blue rosemary – another of 'Mary's Flowers'.

Today the cloister is simply a grassy expanse but maybe at some future date a proper Marian Garden will be created to once more add interest, colour and fragrance to the cloisters.

Margaret Campion

Rain did not stop play!

Despite heavy rain, many members of the community and friends enjoyed the Pentecost Platinum picnic in the cloister at the beginning of June, entertained by 'Sounds Easy' who played a selection of music from the seven decades of the Queen's reign.





Elys Marguerite Varney 1933 - 2022

Born in Lewisham, South London. Elys read classics at London University, did a year's research in Greece, then obtained her first post teaching classics in Birmingham.

She is remembered for her patience and kindness but also for being delightfully giggly. She took a small group of girls on an archaeology trip to Lincoln where she was later seen holding hands with a man! This was Roderick Varney, a fellow classics teacher whom she eventually married in 1968. They settled in Lincoln, where they both taught, Elys employed at South Park. Sadly, widowed at the age of 36, family and friends became a lifeline and Elys threw herself into Lincoln's community life, joining a range of clubs and societies. Through archaeology, history, music and daily worship at the cathedral, as well as her teaching career, Elys built a wide circle of friends.

Member and president of Lincoln Association of Women Graduates for over 50 years, Elys was a long-standing member of the Civic Trust, the Lincoln National Trust and the Society for Lincoln History and Archaeology. A committee member of the Friends of Lincoln Cathedral, she sang alto in the Choral Society, and was regularly at the Wednesday Music Group.

Retiring from South Park, Elys became a WEA tutor and did private tuition. Among many tributes, she is cited as a wonderful teacher, a kind and caring woman who touched the lives of many young people, and was full of integrity and thoughtfulness.

Her widely varied life had many diverse commitments. Strongly independent, Elys happily tackled everything, whether it was teaching, travelling alone to New York for a family wedding or driving all over the country for family events and her many interests. She was clever, kind, friendly and thoughtful with an indomitable sense of adventure, a love of travel and a deep connection with her family.

To the end, her strong faith, commitment to family and friends, sharing her knowledge and serving the community were the bedrock of her life. Above all was her undying love for her husband, Rod, whom she mourned throughout her life without him. Their all-too-short time together and her faith sustained her to the end. Elys will be so missed by us all.

Lindsey Sutton

And the moral is.... 'Never say "no"'. '

That's what I nearly did when my son rang with an offer to help me fulfil a childhood dream. An early start, four hours travelling and an afternoon commitment caused my near refusal. However, on learning that the tide times were perfect and the weather forecast promising, I decided to say "Yes" instead.

So what was this ambition held for over 60 years? It was a fairly modest wish to walk to the end of Filey Brigg. Every summer, throughout my '50s childhood, we spent a week's holiday in Bridlington, during which we would have an excursion north to Whitby or Scarborough or Robin Hood's Bay. There was a moment on that journey when the A165 crested a hill revealing Filey Bay below. I was fascinated by the spit of land jutting out into the sea and always wished we could go down to explore it. But we never did.

And so, decades later, on a perfect sunny September Saturday, in the company of my son and grandson, I finally stood on the end of Filey Brigg.

All three of us enjoyed a wonderful day out in Filey but there was one final treat: we stopped in Bridlington for fish and chips, and a walk around the harbour and along South-beach.

Returning home, with an ambition fulfilled and a head full of memories I was very glad that I hadn't said "No".

Prue Chadderton



A very belated welcome to Ruth Creasey, our Visitor Experience Team Leader

Ruth actually started her new role in our cathedral in December 2018, but lockdown hit us all the following March and it is only now that we are making up for lost time and wishing her well.

Growing up in Lincolnshire, Ruth was always fascinated by the past. As a small child she would carry out excavations in her back garden, triumphantly unearthing not-so-old pottery. On leaving school, she embarked upon a successful career in retail, predominantly in Customer Services. However, her passion for Archaeology could not be ignored, and she studied for a degree in Archaeology at Nottingham University.

This career change was certainly the right one as Ruth loved her academic studies, the Bronze Age Aegean becoming her passion. She relished excavating in Italy, before travelling to Australia after graduation, hoping to excavate there, but this was not to be. Instead, she spent two very happy, fulfilling years working on a Cattle Station and Road House in North Queensland. Here she was a Jillaroo, a Jack of all trades, herding cattle, driving trucks and helping in the hotel. China then beckoned and she spent 18 interesting months in Suzhou teaching English.

Once back in Blighty, she worked at Lincoln College, then enrolled on a Masters degree in Medieval Studies at Lincoln University. Her love of history was rekindled and her dissertation was on "Magic represented in the medieval church". With this pedigree and her positive personality, one can see why she was offered the post in our cathedral.

Ruth is very much a "people person" and enjoys her role in charge of the Visitor Experience Team. Among other things, she has to liaise with the different teams of guides and organise tour parties. She wants to ensure that every visitor enjoys their time in the cathedral and "appreciates this amazing space".

Particularly rewarding was the huge number of people who came here to see the moon. The hardworking guides had to accommodate over 25,000 visitors in just two weeks. A real challenge! Since the end of lockdown group bookings have surged, which Ruth welcomes and it is good to be able to offer visitors the delights of the new Exhibition Gallery and Learning area, not to mention our new café.



The Visitor Experience Team Leader must be constantly looking for ways to improve the experience of all the different people who come to our cathedral, as well as consolidating the good work of the past. Ruth relishes being able to draw on the knowledge and experience of the many motivated and talented guides. Working with different groups of them, specialised "Experience Days" are being planned. A Military History Day has been discussed, as well as study days on individuals associated with our cathedral such as Eleanor of Castile and Katherine Swynford. Looking at the cathedral experience in particular periods of history, for example during King Henry VIII's reign or the Civil War, is also possible. Certainly, Ruth is determined to "put Lincoln Cathedral on the map, not just domestically but also internationally!" I am sure that we are all strongly in favour of this ambition.

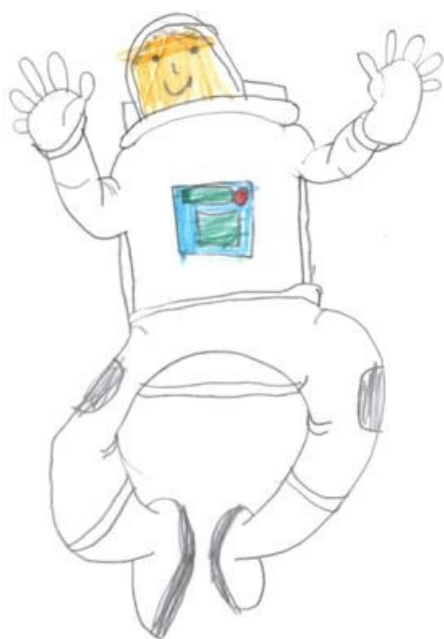
Judi Jones

Helen Sharman at Lincoln Cathedral

It was a cold, starry night when our granddaughter Lucille (7), son-in-law Andrew and I set off for the cathedral. They had driven down from Durham that afternoon, for both are very keen on space. We found that the very diverse audience in the cathedral was alive with chatter and anticipation of a good evening. At 7.30pm promptly, the Dean welcomed us, and then Helen Sharman, to the cathedral. As Helen bounced on to the stage, beneath the suspended moon, I stole a glance at Lucille. She was open-mouthed in disbelief that she was seeing a *real* astronaut. So began an hour-long enthusiastic talk, taking us through her many and varied experiences. On graduation from Sheffield University, she took a post developing ice cream flavours for a very appropriately named confectionary firm, (Mars). Aged 26, she heard on the radio an advertisement for an astronaut, "No experience necessary". Why me? But why not? she thought. And from 13,000 applicants, following a rigorous selection procedure, Helen was chosen, along with Tim Mace.

Both did all the intense training and preparation, not knowing who would eventually be the one launched into space, and who would be back-up. Whichever was chosen, he/she would be in space with two Russian astronauts.

Training involved learning Russian (with a teacher who spoke no English), accustoming them to weightlessness, motion sickness, the 4G force at take-off, and learning to use all the specialist machinery and equipment needed.



Eventually the day came, and Helen was selected to go into space. Much of her time there was spent, as a chemist, doing planned experiments. One regret is that she had little time to do her own experiments.

Looking out on earth was wonderful. Other stars and planets seemed brighter. Sleeping could simply be curled up anywhere, owing to the zero gravity. She found the return to earth far more uncomfortable than the 4G force at launch.

After the hour's talk, we were all invited to put questions in a basket and when Helen returned to her place beneath the moon, she answered a good number of these.

Q. What are the psychological effects of the isolation from home, the intensity of the training/work and the very different outlook?

A. Psychological effects are mainly due to isolation. This was in the days before email or mobile phone. The only contact with friends and family were through a land line call, which had to be booked a week in advance, and then Helen had to be available during a 3-hour time slot when she would be connected. The calls were brief!

Q. As a teacher, how would I encourage a child who expressed an interest in being an astronaut?

A. A child interested in a career in space travel would be advised to study science subjects, but also to have good manual dexterity through playing a musical instrument or craft work hobbies. There is a lot of intricate manual work involved.

Q. What was your favourite space food?

A. Food, of course, could not be served on a plate due to zero gravity. All food was prepacked. Helen told a story of throwing breadsticks, which simply continued to "sail" through the air, until caught in someone's mouth. I think they had fun, too.

Finally, toilets, which people always want to know about. They had to be adapted when a woman went into space! Suction is involved. Nothing is "wasted". Google 'toilets in space' for a more detailed answer.

As we walked home, we were accompanied by a just-past-full moon shining on us from the south east. All that remained now, apart from memories, was for Lucille to tell Grandad all about her exciting evening.

Janet Stockton

Thursday 24th February
Astronaut report

I left school early from Chevely park primary school to see Helen Sharmon. My Gran and grandad live in Lincoln so I went to their house, had tea then went to the cathedral. I loved the astronaut talk. I learned how they throw bread sticks at each other. It sounded fun. Her joke was very funny! I have a joke too. Q How do

aliens hold up trousers? A. An asteroid belt!



Lucille, age 7

5 Star
rating

Editor and Editorial Policy

The current editor of InHouse is Simon Crookall, supported by Margaret Campion, Elaine Johnson and Judi Jones and with photographs supplied by the editorial team and authors. Decisions on content are made by the editors for each edition of InHouse. Submissions of short articles are welcomed though it may not always be possible to use all pieces as space is limited; articles are also commissioned to address identified issues. We reserve the right to edit, carry forward or not include submitted articles.

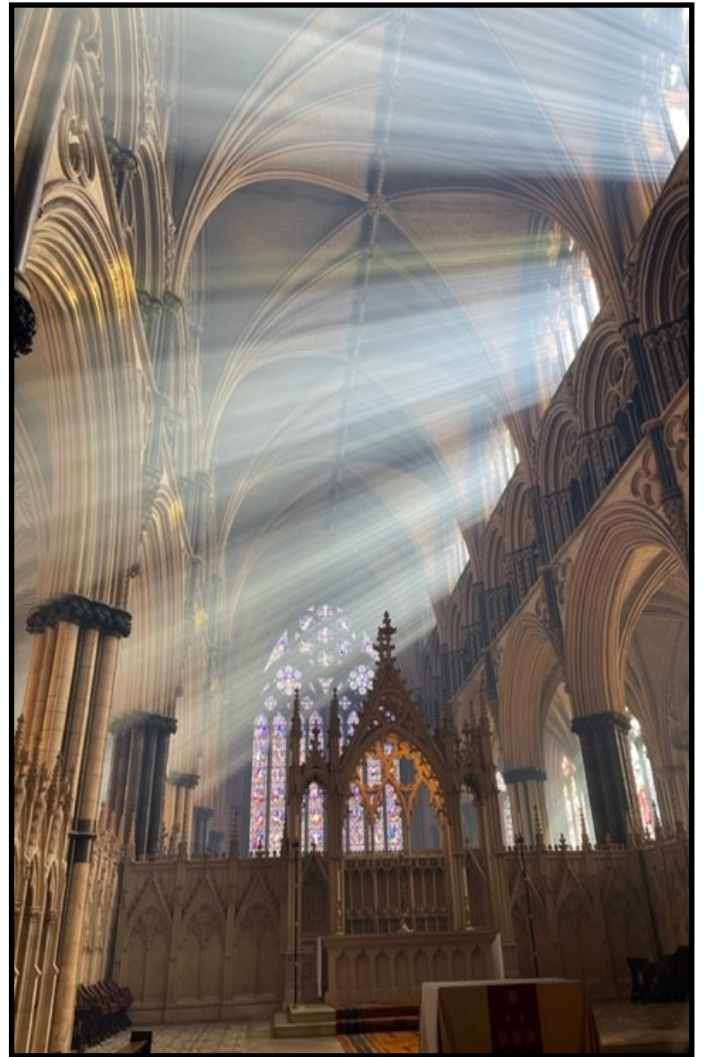
Copy for the next edition should be emailed to the Editors at inhouse@lincolncathedral.com by 15th September 2022 as attachments in Word format; accompanying photographs are also welcomed as JPEG files. Please don't insert photos, clip art or illustrations into the Word files but send them separately in as high a resolution as possible. Advice for contributors is available - please email for a copy. Regrettably it is not possible to accept hard copy as we do not have any secretarial resources. The link to InHouse is published in the chapter letter when it is produced and also on the cathedral website under 'Latest News'.

Napoleon

My Nanna was a keen rag rug maker. She would take lengths of coloured material and interweave them. Reds, blues, whites, soft, crinkly, or smooth. Each thread reacted in a different way to the others and so each had to be treated with a different kind of care, in order to produce that beautiful Rag Rug that I would so often lie on. Just like those threads used in my Nanna's Rag Rugs, our roles as Vergers in Lincoln Cathedral intertwine with others: visitors, departments, volunteers, and outside events. In the Vergers' role I see threads representing the bells, tasks, prayers, cleaning, traditions, worship and new events; the list is endless, secular or sacred.

In the middle of March, we welcomed and wove a new, exciting thread we affectionately named 'Hollywood'. For a few weeks, time stood still, the scene was set and we were taken into Napoleonic times. Working this 21st Century thread into our ancient (and modern) fabric might have brought its difficulties, but it didn't. In came the thread that bore the building of sets, the tight white trousers, the tousled hair, the timetables, the marquees being erected, litres of water, layers upon layers of fabric, lights, smoke, big hats, large dresses, marching soldiers and a few horses! Lights, camera action!

Reminiscing, I remember that my Nanna's rag rugs always began with a latch hook canvas used as a support for the material she wanted to be threaded. Like my Nanna's latch hook canvas base the service bells at Lincoln Cathedral are a constant support and rhythm to our day, held with much love and importance by the Vergers' team and the locals. Always rung before prayer heralding worship, marking prayer as an important part of the day. I would be wrong to say the bells are always welcomed by some, they often interrupt work, or that quiet moment, that chat with friends, but much more importantly they teach us to stop, to contemplate and to remind us that one of our first priorities is to stand in the presence of God. As Sister Cs (a nun from St. Cecelia) puts it "The bell is a patient and persistent teacher through the outward discipline; it teaches us to give God first place in the depths of our hearts as well as our timetables. "



If there was one thing to say about the set crew and cast, it was that they took our patterns of work to their hearts. They were professional, sensitive and most importantly stopped, and bowed their heads at prayer. They could have so easily thought the Nave is closed for their exclusive use, and that there was no need to stop for prayers, 'a waste of time' perhaps and nobody would see so it didn't matter..... but they didn't. They took on board our canvas and understood, that just like our service bells tolling from the tower, our prayers reach through all the happenings to us and beyond, into and throughout the meandering passageways of Lincoln. Allowing their thread to collectively join us into one big community of worship and finishing of a truly remarkable, warm, well-structured rug.

It's a wrap! Hollywood has left the building but the Opus Dei carries on.

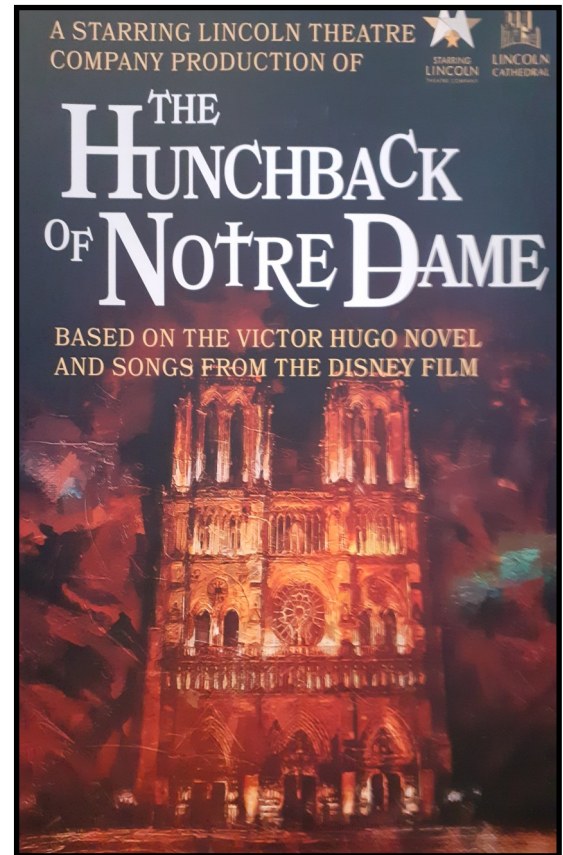
Jo Blanchard

The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Noticing an appeal for choir members for the up-and-coming production of *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, on Facebook, I went with a friend to the initial meeting. We were to be a backing group of singers supporting the cast and ensemble. We sang small excerpts of the score then left feeling we had let ourselves in for a bit of a challenge!

Rehearsals started, led by a wonderful team of choir leaders and the MD James Fox. The cast and ensemble had been learning the score, and some of the choir members had already learned some of the songs, which was a great help. I had never heard any of the music before. It has been the most difficult score I have ever learned, but also the most satisfying. Most of the songs were in Latin, some was shouting, but it all started to come together as performance dates loomed. We had joint rehearsals with the cast and ensemble, which was great as it put our score in context with the whole production. Seeing the story being told in dance, drama and song was beautiful, so much hard work had been done by all involved. We then had rehearsals with the orchestra, a bunch of fabulous musicians.

Performance Day arrived and there we were, smartly turned out in our black outfits; it felt like being at the top of a ski jump, once launched there would be no turning back. What a fabulous experience it was from start to finish. I was singing with an amazing group of talented singers who gave their all. For twelve nights we sang our hearts out, and even though it was exhausting towards the end, it never lost the sparkle.



The setting within the cathedral was perfect. After the final performance, realising that we would no longer be meeting for rehearsals or performing again, was a wrench. Becoming a part of this production was the best decision I had made and I am already looking forward to the next one!

Linda Jones

A standing ovation was the well-deserved audience response to this enthusiastic production by the amateur Starring Lincoln Theatre Company on the night which I attended. Comments overheard included: 'the immensity of the auditorium', 'fantastic lighting' and 'I've never experienced anything like it'.

Climbing to the very back row of the seating, a friend was level with the stiff leaf carving on the nave pillars. What an opportunity to see the cathedral from a very different angle!

Central to the story is the cathedral of Notre Dame and watching this production taking place in the crossing of our own cathedral against the choir screen was inspiring. The architecture was no stage set or clever scenery; it was real.

Congratulations must go to all who took part, both on stage and behind the scenes, and the indefatigable cathedral staff and volunteers who so ably supported it.

Elaine Johnson

The Community Picnic at Sempringham, 18 June 2022.



The week before had been classified as 'heat wave'; the day following and the subsequent week were perfect June days – but Saturday 18th June??? Damp, drizzly, cloudy and really rather dismal! I always thought the sun shone upon the righteous!

Never mind, 33 members of the Community and friends gathered at Billingborough for coffee and then set out on the two miles of remote one-way field road to the church of Sempringham which sits by itself in a field, there being no longer a village.

Sempringham was a Saxon village which was granted to Gilbert of Sempringham, a Norman knight who married a Saxon lady. Their eldest son, another Gilbert, was disabled and unable to take over the knightly duties of an eldest son and instead joined a seminary in France and became a priest. He returned to Sempringham to minister to the parish and because he was interested in education for women (several centuries before anyone else was bothered!) he started a small priory group of six poor local women which thrived and grew and even MEN started to join the group – suitably separated of course – and eventually they became an established monastic order of both canons and canonesses called the Gilbertine Order.

This was the only entirely English monastic order ever founded. They were dis-established by Henry VIII at the Reformation and the original Abbey church was abandoned. The present church is the original parish church, now, of course, much altered over the years.

Picked as the focus of our Community Picnic, the final *Journey of Faith Pilgrimage Walk* starts at Sempringham and it was a suitable point to 'launch' this final Journey in the series. Nan Davenport, the official church guide met us and introduced the story of Gilbert and his Order.

We ate our picnics in the church because of the rain, then two groups of walkers set off: John Harker led one group on a straight walk to Threkingham, the second church on the *Journey of Faith* route, and David Ford led a circular walk to Billingborough. Both groups arrived back at Sempringham, damp but happy, and re-joined the remnant of non-walkers who had enjoyed a full tour of the church with Nan Davenport.

As my own group drove away, we stopped at a memorial near the church, to a young Welsh princess called Gwenllïan who was the only surviving heir to the Welsh throne after Edward I had subdued that country and proclaimed his own son as the first English Prince of Wales. She was 18 months old when she was effectually kidnapped by Edward I and put into the care of the nuns at Sempringham. There she remained for 55 years! As we read the short biography on the memorial stone, we wondered how she must have felt – denied the chance to be young, to be a bride, a mother, a respected member of the Welsh ruling families... Poor Gwenllïan, condemned to live enclosed in a community not of her choice for so many weary years!

Margaret Campion.



Photos by courtesy of Michael Newstead

