



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 89, the Verger

Wikipedia

Verger

A verger (or virger, so called after the staff of the office) is a person, usually a layperson, who assists in the ordering of religious services, particularly in Anglican churches.

History

The office of verger has its roots in the early days of the Church of England's history. The Order shares certain similarities with the former Minor Orders. Historically, vergers were responsible for the order and upkeep of a house of worship, including the care of the church buildings, its furnishings, and sacred relics, preparations for liturgy, conduct of the laity, and grave-digging responsibilities.

Although there is no definitive historical examination of the office of verger, evidence from Rochester, Lincoln, Exeter, and Salisbury Cathedrals points to the existence of vergers even in the 16th century. *Koster* is the Dutch word for sexton or verger (the equivalent German word is "Küster"), derived from the Latin *custos* (guard).

The symbol of a guild of cathedral vergers is the crossed keys. Perhaps the best-known portrait of an Anglican verger in fiction is in Somerset Maugham's short story, "The Verger".

Duties

During the service itself, a verger's main duty is ceremonially to precede the religious participants as they move about the church; he or she does not typically take any speaking part in the service itself. It could be argued that a verger's main pride during a service lies in his or her inconspicuousness; vergers often play a very prominent role "behind the scenes" — helping to plan the logistical details of service and discreetly shepherding the clergy through it (in some churches these latter duties are handled by a Master of Ceremonies, while the verger functions as a sort of marshal in the procession).

The virge



This is a traditional virge.

Note the brass ball at the end with a small cross on top.

The office's title comes from the ceremonial rod which a verger carries, a virge (from the Latin *virga*, "branch, staff, rod"; see virgule). The Maces of State used in the House of Lords and the House of Commons of the British Parliament are examples of another modern use of the medieval virge.

In former times, a verger might have needed to use his virge to keep back animals or an overenthusiastic crowd from the personage he was escorting or even to discipline unruly choristers.

Robes

The typical robes of a vergers are a black gown worn over a black cassock. The gown is somewhat like an academic gown and is open fronted in the English tradition.

It is common for a vergers gown to bear the arms of the church, usually on one or both sleeves. It can be trimmed with velvet, which may be in another colour (a colour prominently associated with the Cathedral, for instance).

Formally, a jabot may be worn at the neck. Less formally, a vergers may wear a gown without a cassock below, or, conversely, a cassock without the gown. In more modern settings, a vergers might wear a scapular instead of a gown.

If a vergers also serves at the altar during divine worship, the gown is often replaced with a surplice.

