

Friends of Bolton Priory

PRIORY CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ST CUTHBERT
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A Letter from Jill Riley, Chairman of the Friends of Bolton Priory

Dear Friends

It is with profound regret that our schedule of events for 2020 has had to be cancelled or postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We are without doubt facing a very scary and uncertain period.

Most of us are not used to having time on our hands and I think this situation gives us the opportunity to reflect on the good times we've had and plan for better times to come. I have been thinking about the events and experiences that I have had over the last 6 months.

Some of you may remember that last October I undertook the Pilgrimage to Compostela de Santiago in Northern Spain. We walked approximately 100 miles over a period of five days. I walked sometimes alone but mostly in groups of anything between 2 to six or eight people. It was a very uplifting experience and the companionship and support of fellow pilgrims was very powerful.....so here I am today just 6 months later and can only go out once a day for exercise on my own or with my husband!

Only two weeks ago I was fortunate enough to be invited by my very good friend and fellow Executive Committee member Jenny Laycock to attend the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey in the presence of her Majesty the Queen and members of her family. A truly magnificent and memorable occasion. Over two and a half thousand people in that spectacular building enjoying not only the wonderful and moving service but chatting and meeting people from all parts of the Commonwealth many of them proudly wearing their national dress.

The common theme of these two particular events is the being together both with friends and strangers all of which have made the enjoyment of the events so important and meaningful.

That is why in this dreadful situation in which we find ourselves it is vitally important to keep in touch with family and friends and an opportunity maybe to make new friends via the various forms of communication we have at our disposal today. What of the future? At the moment it is all cancellations and postponements. However, I'm busy making lists, cleaning out my greenhouse and shed, sow seeds, garden, sort files and get 'My Ducks in a Row' as my Mother used to say. In fact, I have so much to do the weeks are going to fly by.

At our May AGM I was due to stand down as Chairman, a position I have held for three years. I must have been the most reluctant person ever to have taken the Chair and stipulated at the time that I would just do it for a year as a stopgap until a 'proper' Chairman could be found! I now find myself 3 years later having to do a few months longer until we can hold the 2020 AGM. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been your Chairman. I have enjoyed every single minute of it and wouldn't have missed it for the world! When the time does come for me to hand over the reins I shall do it with the utmost pride and gratitude to all members of the Friends who have been so supportive and kind over the years.

I have discovered that whilst washing my hands so frequently the best mantra to recollect which takes just twenty seconds is The Lord's Prayer!

Please stay safe and keep well.

Jill Riley

THE REVD NICHOLAS MERCER

QUESTIONS BY JEAN CRAWFORD, EDITOR OF THE FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER



Recognising that our Rector has been with us at The Priory for one year, his induction being 1 April 2019, I wondered whether he would kindly reflect on the past twelve months. I recall that he had the PCC AGM during his first week; we also included an additional item in the Friends' calendar when he delivered the Autumn Lecture which was so well received. We had an amazingly hot summer causing fires globally, followed by excessive rain that caused flooding in many areas and now all church services and meetings have been cancelled because of the Coronavirus. Throughout this time he has also had the added challenge of juggling his ministry at the Priory whilst maintaining family life from a distance. Quite a year!

How did you first hear about the vacancy for a Rector at Bolton Priory? As some of you may know, I was the Rector of the Falkland Islands in 2018 but I had to return to the United Kingdom in the Autumn of that year as my Father was dying. Quite by chance, I met the Bishop of Ripon whilst I was staying with my brother in Ripon. She understood the difficulty of working overseas and wondered if I would consider a vacancy that had arisen at Bolton Abbey.

What was your immediate reaction? I thought it was a non-starter! However, I went to visit the parish as I had long days staying with my brother during my Father's final few weeks. Even after visiting I thought that it was a remote possibility given the potential family dislocation but decided to apply nevertheless

How does being the Rector at Bolton Priory contrast with your previous posts within the Church? I have done a variety of jobs since being ordained. I was first a curate in Dorset and then a school chaplain. Neither compare with running a parish. My first parish was challenging but the main difference is the wonderful warmth of the parishioners and the friendship and co-operation amongst the worshipping community.

Bolton Abbey is a beautiful part of the county and a popular tourist attraction. You therefore have the opportunity to meet hundreds of people every week. How does this influence your ministry? There is a ministry to tourists at Bolton Priory. This was similar to the Falkland Islands where there were approximately 60,000 tourists each year. I enjoyed this ministry very much as each day provides an opportunity to welcome new people to Church and touch their lives. It is an outreach to vast numbers of people and a chance for them to encounter Christ, possibly for the first time. It is also an inter-faith ministry as we estimate that we have approximately 20,000 Muslim visitors to Bolton Priory each year.

I'm sure that you have a lengthy list but please would you try to note three particularly memorable events/instances during the past year. The first most memorable event was the very warm welcome I received when I came to visit the parish in March 2019. I rang my wife immediately afterwards and told her how uplifted I had been by my visit. I was very moved by the Good Friday vigil and relieved to have led a three hour service successfully! The lunch with St Luke's, Manningham on the International Day for Victims of Torture brought together Christians from Iran to the Yorkshire Dales and showed how we were truly brothers and sisters in Christ both locally and globally.

Living at a distance from your family is obviously not easy and requires a strong relationship. Have the restrictions that have been imposed as a result of COVID-19 compounded your situation and if so, how have you overcome them? **We are all now thankfully under one roof. It has been difficult living at a distance but it has allowed me to devote all my attention to running the parish in the first year. School terms have now been cancelled so we will all be together for the foreseeable future.**

That all church services, meetings, weddings and baptisms have been cancelled is unprecedented. As well as the Bolton Priory community being affected, couples who had been making wedding plans are no longer able to proceed. What steps have you taken to try to reduce the effect as a result? **This is work in progress as we still do not know how long the current crisis will last. We have written to those getting married in May, June and July and advised them to make new arrangements for their wedding. At the moment, we have tried to accommodate these weddings later in the year. However, if the crisis continues then we will have to re-arrange all the weddings currently list for 2020 and move them to 2021 - which is already fully booked. This could result in 60+ weddings next year but we are determined to help each and every couple.**

Most of us who are having to stay at home have resolved to spend our time productively by doing jobs that we've been putting off, practising a musical instrument or have decided to learn a new skill or language. Have you made a similar resolution or will you be busier than ever? **Coronavirus has had an enormous impact on the running a Parish and most of the changes have come in the last week. It has affected all services, including weddings and baptisms. Everyone affected has had to be contacted and services continually re-arranged. It has impacted Church governance, safeguarding, finance and day to day administration. The parish office is now closed. Naturally, there have been numerous questions from everyone who has a role in parish life and decisions have had to be made. The website is being continually updated to reflect these changes. At the same time, we have gone digital and introduced audio services as well as telephone contact with the entire parish. This is all within the first week!**

For many, the current situation is tough. Is there a particular passage in the scriptures from which you gain spiritual strength? **No passage of Scripture has leapt out at me but I am continually struck by the liturgical resonance with the current crisis. We are travelling through Lent together which is forty days and forty nights. Forty days is the origin of the word quarantine in which we now find ourselves as a nation. We are about to enter Holy Week in which the Passion of our Lord unfolds. This year, Holy Week will be roughly the same time that the virus is meant to spike in the UK. Many people in the UK will be suffering just as the Lord suffered. We tell the Christian story each year so that we learn how to understand our own lives through a Christian paradigm. This is clearer this year more than it ever has been. Paradoxically, in darkness light can be seen more clearly and I hope that, in the midst of this crisis, we can see more clearly than ever the hope and triumph of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reverend Nicholas Mercer

Priory Church of St May and St Cuthbert

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

POSTPONED

Understandably, where the message is "To stay at home to save lives", the Annual General Meeting that was to be held in May has had to be postponed. Several people had already purchased tickets for the AGM lunch. We hope to reschedule the AGM for later in the year and of course tickets will remain valid for that date. However, if you would prefer to receive a refund, please email jean_crawford@rocketmail.com and we will endeavour to arrange this as soon as possible. Thank you.



The Website for the Friends

www.prioryfriends.org.uk is open to all to read on the Internet. There you will find past Newsletters, stories, pictures of events and lots of information. Our grateful thanks to Emma Paggett of Hartleys Auctioneers for maintaining the Friends' website.

REPORT ON THE SPRING LECTURE 2020

COLIN ALDERSON - CHEF TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD

Despite an understandably depleted attendance, the Friends of Bolton Priory Spring Lecture went ahead as planned and what a treat we had. Colin's presentation was both informative and entertaining as he divulged some of the secrets of the royal household that only such an employee would be party to. As Colin reflected on his youth as a Yorkshire Dales lad through to his experiences working at the royal palaces, his talk oozed enthusiasm and humour that held the audience captivated. Colin's presentation comprised so many wonderful slides, not too dissimilar to sharing someone's treasured family photos or holiday snaps.



Born in Arkengarthdale near Tan Hill which is the northernmost part of the Dales. The second son of six children, academic life was not for Colin and he generally managed to dodge going to school at least two days a week. Eventually, he applied for a job at The Greta Bridge Hotel some seven miles from his home. However, on the day of his interview, having completed the distance on foot, the proprietor was too tired to see him and he was asked to return the following day. Unsurprisingly, he didn't!

Colin had always enjoyed cooking and completed a catering course at Scarborough Technical College. Then, in February 1972 he obtained employment in the royal kitchens – a position that he held for nearly six years. This provided him with totally different experiences in stark contrast to those of his formative years.

Learning from the more experienced chefs in the royal kitchens, Colin mastered his culinary art. Timing of course, was an essential part of service to ensure perfection when the meal was served. Menus for each day were presented to the Queen in advance and we saw her hand written notes alongside each course detailing her preferences – “not too creamy” or “more lemon”.



On alternate weekends and throughout the month of April, all staff were transported to Windsor Castle, taking all the kitchen equipment with them. The summer period was spent at Balmoral and the rota was arranged so that half the staff would remain on duty whilst the other half enjoyed the holiday. This ensured that everyone in the royal party was able to enjoy the break in the beautiful Scottish Highlands.

Susan Barker gave the vote of thanks and Jill Riley brought the evening to a close. The evening had passed too quickly and I'm sure that Colin has stories that could have filled at least another couple of hours.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

At the end of January membership stood at 247 or 373 if joint members are counted separately.

About a third of the membership is made up of Priory Church members. Of the remaining members, they have addresses in more or less every county in England together with representation in Scotland and in Wales. Some members live in continental Europe including France, Greece and Portugal. We have eight members registered in the United States including two who live in far-away Hawaii. A truly wide representation of support for the Friends and the Priory Church.

The Friends is a charity whose aim is to support the mission of the Priory Church. Our funds are used only to support that mission. The majority of our income comes from members' subscriptions. Other sources of income are donations, legacies and the surpluses on Friends social events. I thank all members for their support of the Friends and especially those with distant addresses. *Keith Simpson*