



From the Canon Precentor

At Midnight Mass this year, I recalled Christmas Eve 2004 in Bethlehem. Then, as now, there was tension, elevated by the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the ensuing power vacuum. I was singing with a choir from London, in a concert tour of Mozart's Requiem in Israel and Palestine. The repertoire was deliberately chosen for its apolitical stance and its artistic integrity rather than a more seasonal or festive work.

I had always known of the politics of Christmas but had never actually experienced it until then. I recall my questioning upon arrival at immigration at Tel Aviv airport: "Where are you going?" "To Jerusalem, and Bethlehem," I replied. "Why would you want to go to *Bethlehem*?" the officer retorted with a sneer. "It's the Christian Festival of Christmas," I replied, and with an exclamation and a shrug she let me through.

Bethlehem, then, as this year, was empty on Christmas Eve. Shops, businesses and all who relied upon the tourist and pilgrim trade were all closed. The security walls that surround Bethlehem were particularly impassable for the locals that year, and embassies worldwide had advised against festive travel. We sang a short carol service, our only act of worship, in the Baptistry of the Church of the Nativity. Mahmoud Abbas the future, and current, President of Palestine, came to our service, in solidarity with the Christian minority of Bethlehem. He arrived with armed guards: young soldiers bristling with guns, grenades at their belts. We sang, and it was a carol service pretty much like any other, except that we stood round a font, that the readings, both in Arabic and English replaced all references to "Israel" with "Emmanuel" and, that if anything had gone wrong, none of us would have made it out, and world war three would have been imminent.

As we know from the complex views held across communities and nations, the politics of the Holy Land is not straightforward. There can be no justification for the actions of Hamas, but it has not acted in a vacuum, and there is a growing

international consensus that Israel's action in Gaza are unlikely to secure the desired peace, and it is coming at a terrible cost. The plight of child hostages and casualties of war in Gaza has been highlighted repeatedly, with many churches abandoning their more stylised nativity scenes for infant Jesus laid not in a manger, which was of course degrading enough, but in rubble.

For me, however, that night in Bethlehem simply reminded me of the message of Christmas "Peace on earth". For us that night in 2004, it meant peace in our carol service; peace for the people of Bethlehem; a peaceful border, for freedom of movement in and out of Bethlehem; peace for the teenage border guards who searched our bus and bags, fearful for their lives, guns at the ready, as we journeyed back to Jerusalem for Midnight Mass.

Violence begets violence. We have seen that in Northern Ireland and countless other places of conflict in our own time, let alone the past. Only peace can beget peace. And peace requires not only reconciliation, but a recognition of the dignity of the other. In the person of Jesus, God becomes one of us. God becomes part of our flesh, and so dignifies all our flesh, but only with the dignity that it had in the beginning, lost due to our petty greeds and quarrels.

36 hours late, early in the morning of Boxing Day, a group of us gathered, at dawn, at the Wailing Wall. We had been up all night, walking up to the Mount of Olives and back into the city. A young Israeli soldier approached us and offered us a welcome coffee. She was on duty at the Temple Mount. She looked like the Michelin Man, but her padded suit was to prevent her from being killed that day. "Every day," she explained simply "someone charges at me with a knife. This suit prevents me from being stabbed." She was 18 years old, an Israeli citizen doing her national service.

Christianity has not been, and is not everywhere, the agent of God's peace. That is a humbling truth that the Church and all Christians must face. But that does not undermine or undervalue the aspiration for peace, for the Peace of God. In a world dominated by religion, longing for Peace on Earth is surely not just a message for Christmas, but for all faiths, throughout this year.

James Mustard

The February edition of *Cathedral News*

We hope to publish the next edition of the *News* on Sunday 4th February 2024. The deadline for material is **Monday 29th January 2024**. Please send any contributions to hmm53@tiscali.co.uk or to any member of the editorial team; Heather Morgan, Rosemary Bethell, and Jenny Ellis.

Slow Book Group: *My Theology: The Word within the words* by Malcolm Guite

Malcolm Guite is a bestselling poet, priest and academic, and a life fellow of Girton College, Cambridge, where he was chaplain for nearly twenty years.

In *The Word within the words*, Malcolm describes how his Christian faith informs and underpins his poetry, and in turn how poetry itself, and more widely the poetic imagination, helps him to understand and interpret his faith. He bears witness to how Scripture, Liturgy and Sacrament can each be understood as a poetry capable of transfiguring our vision and transforming our lives.

A one-off slow book group meeting, co-led by Clare Bryden and Revd Phil Wales, is being planned for those who wish to read and reflect together on this rich, even though short, book. It will take place on Zoom from 7pm-8.30pm on **Thursday 1st February**.

Places are limited. If you would like to know more about what the Slow Book Group involves or if you would like to sign up for this meeting please email Revd Phil Wales, Assistant Curate (phil.wales@exeter-cathedral.org.uk).

Advance Notice: Following this stand-alone meeting, the Slow Book Group will return after Easter for a series of monthly meetings exploring together *Befriending Silence* by Carl McColman. Further details to follow.

Cathedral Community Committee 9th January 2024

In answer to the question, what one thing would most help to build up the Cathedral Community this year, suggestions included: improve communications within the Cathedral Community, have a “mugshot board” with photos of clergy and lay office holders, make better use of the Cathedral website and ensure it is up to date, a Jazz Mass, more frequent involvement of Cloister Club in the 10am Sung Eucharist, better engagement with newcomers, improve our welcome, complete a modernised version of the Cathedral Directory, develop our life of prayer, and arrange at least two parties this year-in the spring and autumn. We'll do our best to act on these ideas.

We were very grateful to receive a report from Anne Eyre about contacts with our link dioceses, and also discussed issues concerning Prayers for Healing and the opportunities afforded by the large audiences at concerts and other events in the Cathedral.

The next meeting will be on 13th February. Please send any suggestions for the agenda to Ann Barwood, Clerk to the Cathedral Community.

Heather Morgan, Chair CCC

In Conversation with The Revd Canon Professor Richard A. Burridge



Sunday 14th January at 6.30pm

Doors open from 6pm, when refreshments will be available

The evening closes with a short service of compline. All are welcome.

Proving the gospels ARE about Jesus - the adventures of a biblical scholar.

Richard will engage in conversation with Revd. Canon Dr. Chris Palmer about his work as a scholar of the Gospels. Talking through his own biography, he will explore his work on understanding the Gospels as 'biography', shedding light on our understanding of Jesus.'

The Revd Canon Professor Richard A. Burridge is an internationally recognised biblical scholar, ethicist, theologian and social commentator. He was Dean of King's College London from 1993 to 2019. Now a Research Fellow in the Department of Theology at the University of Manchester, and a Visiting Professor at Virginia Theological Seminary, USA, he devotes his time to research and writing, as well as his public ministry lecturing and undertaking theological training for clergy and lay people.

In addition to his academic work his best-selling *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* has made biblical scholarship accessible to a wider audience. His academic scholarship and his contribution to the life of the world-wide church was recognised when he was awarded the 2013 Ratzinger Prize by Pope Francis, the first non-Roman Catholic to receive this prestigious prize.

Richard is particularly passionate about the way Mark was written to be heard, rather than read, and his translation from that perspective helps the gospel leap from the page into our imagination."

An Epiphany-Lent Study Group on the Gospel according to St Mark **The Revd Canon Professor Richard A. Burridge**

What? The Seven Week Course will look at Mark's account of Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing, the origins of the conflict with the religious leaders of his day, Mark's discussion of Jesus' identity and mission, as well as prepare us for Holy Week through Mark's narrative of the Passion and Crucifixion. Insights from the Gospel's possible original audience and context will provide clues for how we can read it today, as well as benefit from Mark's wisdom under the suffering of the early church for our concerns two thousand years later. This Epiphany-Lent group will provide an opportunity to "go deeper" in three directions: Deeper **into** the text itself and its original meaning; deeper **back** to its origins, background and historical setting (as much as we can discover that today); and, thirdly, deeper **forward** to its meaning and significance for us today.

When? from 2.30 - 4.30pm Wednesday 31st January, February 7th, February 14th, February 21st, February 28th, March 6th & March 13th

Where? In person in the Richard Eyre Room, Exeter Cathedral (entrance via West Wing of the Cathedral) or remotely via Zoom (using a laptop, tablet or smartphone; no extra software needed).

Who? See page 4 for Richard's biography.

For more information or to book a place, please contact the Revd Canon Professor Richard Burridge at: richard.burridge@manchester.ac.uk

Lent Series 2024 - Female Theologians

All in the Sacristy (Entrance via The West Wing)

Tuesday 6th February, 2024 6.30-8.00pm

St Macrina by Revd. Canon Prof. Morwenna Ludlow

Thursday 15th February, 2024 2.30-4.00pm:

Hildegard of Bingen by Canon Sue Wallace

Tuesday 20th February, 2024 6.30-8.00pm:

St Perpetua by Revd Canon Prof. Morwenna Ludlow

Monday 11th March, 2024 2.30-4.00pm:

Teresa of Avila by Revd Sue Astbury

Reflections on Hymnody with Jeremy Rawlings

Sundays 18th and 25th Feb, March 3rd, 10th and 17th

11.45-1.00pm in the Richard Eyre Room

Many of us will have sung hundreds of hymns in our lives and will no doubt have favourites but how often have you stopped to think about the words, the music, the circumstances of its creation, or considered how the text of the hymn sits within our liturgy?

Hymns or faith songs are an important part of our worship, particularly in a choral tradition, and provide a valuable opportunity to engage with our faith and spirituality at a very personal level.

These sessions are designed to provide a closer look at five hymns with a seasonal feel. We will not just be looking at 'traditional' Lenten hymns but others which fit within the theme.

We will use the music and the words to reflect on our understanding of our relationship with Christ. It will be an opportunity not only to reflect on the season of Lent but also to deepen our own prayer practice in a journey of the heart.

If you would like more information, please do contact Jeremy Rawlings at jeremyrawlings3@gmail.com

News from CTaX



Sunday 21st January 3pm

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service

At Blessed Sacrament Church, EX1 2QJ

Annual united prayer service - hear more about The Gather Movement (gathermovement.org) resources for flourishing unity, pray for local

charities and ministries, and fellowship with Christians together from across Exeter. Please share and do come

Sunday 28th January 4pm

Annual Homelessness Sunday service

At St Petrock's church on Exeter High Street

With refreshments afterwards in St Petrock's centre.

A simple annual church service we host each year to bring together supporters to reflect on homelessness in Exeter, with readings, scripture, songs and a space to remember those from the homeless community who have died over the past year. Everyone is warmly welcomed.

Writing the Next Chapter: The 2020s Development Appeal Project Update

Through December our own Masons have done a wonderful job completing conservation of the windows in the south Quire Aisle from bays 9 – 11 (counting from the Lady Chapel). This includes conservation of the glass in Bay 11 nearest the screen by Dan Humphries Stained Glass Ltd, from Glastonbury. A particular feature of the work is the hood mould and pinwheel star stones . The pinwheel star was replaced using rare local Salcombe stone from the Cathedral's own quarry. Carving this 'pinwheel' tracery has required careful intricate work by one of our six masons, Owen Whitfield. This meant that only light hammers could be used to take away the waste stone. With these windows complete it means we're removing the scaffolding and opening up the south quire aisle to make way for the Crown and Coronation sound and light show.



Laying of the Devon marble to form the wonderful Jubilee Pavement is well underway. We're aiming to provide a good viewing point of the work in the Quire from the North Quire Aisle screen door, and an updated video time-lapse of the great progress. The Cathedral opening time will revert back to 9.30am most days.

The Cloister Gallery is also progressing well, with over 130 pallets of stone delivered to site now, the oak frame of the roof and softwood panelling are nearing completion. It'll be exciting when much of the Cloister scaffold is removed in January and there's a good view through from the Brewer door again. Don't forget you can adopt a stone as part of our fundraising.

We've published the tender for the next phase of work due to start after Easter. This next phase renews the services throughout the East end, including the heating and lighting.

Thank you to everyone for your patience and flexibility over the past year adapting to the work. As a team we're very much looking forward to opening up first the Quire and Jubilee Pavement temporarily for a period leading up to Easter, and then the new Cloister Gallery, Shop and Chapter House will fully open at the end of the summer.

**Amy Haynes Marketing & Communications Executive
& Kit Reynolds Project Manager**

Always beginning in prayer

Happy New Year! After writing these pieces for more than two years, I thought it was time to think about beginnings.

For those thinking about taking up a new prayer practice, here are two tips: do start small and manageable; and *don't* feel guilty. The important thing is to begin. We are all beginners after all.

For those who have been struggling a while, or have got stuck or given up, don't worry. We are all always beginning in prayer. And nothing is lost. Each time we begin again, we begin from where we have arrived, not with a blank slate. The past gifts and workings of the Spirit have value and can be built on; don't sweep them all away.

Thomas Merton wrote, "Paradoxically, I have found peace because I have always been dissatisfied. My moments of depression and despair turn out to be renewals, new beginnings... All life tends to grow like this, in... the realization of the 'new life' that is in us who believe, by the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In Zen Buddhism there is a practice called *shoshin*, or beginner's mind, which fosters an attitude of wide open eagerness and lack of preconceptions. It means understanding that we will never stop learning in every single area of our lives, and will never overcome our human fallibility. The beginner's mind defends us from measuring ourselves against others, keeps us open to possibility, avoids the hubris and closed-mindedness of the expert's mind. The true experts in prayer know that they are always beginning and always will be.

Parker J Palmer wrote, "I am a novice in every new moment of the day, each of which presents possibilities unknown and untried. Why not embrace that fact and see what happens? ... Let's make a pact of mutual support to begin again with a beginner's mind and with hope."

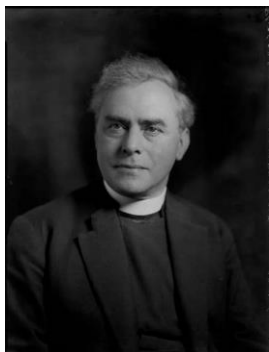
It's important to bear in mind St Benedict's injunction to "Begin everything you attempt with the earnest prayer that it will be brought to perfection." (Prologue to the Rule, Mucknell Abbey). But God is the one bringing to perfection. It is not in our own power.

So at the same time never forget that, most wonderfully, God's love for us is always infinite, never measured by how well we think we're doing or how far along the road. God always delights in our sincere beginners' fumbblings.

Clare Bryden

Explore Prayer on the Cathedral website – <https://bit.ly/exploreprayer2022>

From The Company of Tapisers



In Cloister Garth there is a small room named after a Walter Matthews.

Why? Who was he?

Walter Matthews was Dean of Exeter Cathedral from 1931 until 1934 when he left to become Dean of St Paul's in London. Here he remained for 33 years through some very turbulent times. Churchill himself gave him the unenviable command of protecting St Paul's, and all that it represented, during the darkest days of the Blitz. He was obviously a man of vision and rose to the challenges – and St Paul's WAS saved!

Although not quite as dramatic, he left a legacy in Exeter Cathedral: The Company of Tapisers! It was Dean Matthews who had the idea to create a 'team' to make needlework items to enhance the worship of God and the beauty of Exeter Cathedral. This was 90 years ago – and his vision continues. In 1933 he took a service to welcome the first official Tapisers: there were 67 who joined! Dean Matthews wrote a prayer for that service – the Tapisers' Prayer – which we still use today:

'Eternal God, you have given your people imagination, skill and patience to create works of beauty. Bless us as we seek to preserve and enhance the beauty of this Cathedral. We have glimpsed your glory: help us to reflect it in the works of our hands, and may all who visit this sacred place find joy and solace. In the beautiful things of this world, may we find your eternal beauty to sustain us throughout our lives. Let the favour of the Lord Our God be upon us and prosper the work of our hands. Amen.'

I hope Dean Walter Matthews would have been proud that his dream has endured and, indeed, made a difference to the worship of God here in Exeter.

May we wish you all peace and good health in 2024.

Diana Symes, Chairman of the Company of Tapisers

The First Sunday of the Month

It is always a joy to welcome members of the deaf community who attend the 10am Choral Eucharist on the first Sunday of the month, and also those who assist and support them. Please do greet them all after the service and over coffee.

News from the Cathedral Flower Arrangers

I have written elsewhere about Sylvia, and her absence was very obvious to me when we began arranging for Christmas. She was due to be arranging the lead pillar and she had made it her target to be well again. As I took her place, I am afraid tears really fell.

The Dean loves big, bold and blingy for Christmas so this year we used red, white and gold with contorted willow and made six pillars for the Nave. They seem to have gone down very well as we had lots of compliments. Indeed, you couldn't really miss them after the more restrained Advent arrangements. Getting to put it all away proved very time consuming, so we popped them into the old shop as the workmen were on their break. Three of us returned between Christmas and New Year to sort them out. Needless to say, Sylvia would not have approved of what we decided to dispose of.

Before the Christmas arranging, we prepared the coffin piece and two pedestals for Sylvia's service. Following that service, these returned to the Lady Chapel and St Gabriels's over the Christmas period so they could be enjoyed by everyone.

Earlier in December, we had two mornings making wreaths for Christmas, which had been ordered in advance. We were thrilled with the expressions of delight from all our customers and hope to do the same next year, so look out for the ads in Cathedral News. This not only raises our Cathedral profile but made some money for our pot.

You will see we have returned to silks this week. Commitments inside the Cathedral, and events, mean this is the easiest way to proceed until Easter at least. I heard yesterday that we can have fresh flowers for Easter as it will be twixt contracts for other work in the east end.

May I close with thanking you on behalf of all our ladies for your kind words and support to ECFA about Sylvia's death, and wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Flick Evans, Chair, Exeter Cathedral Flower Arrangers

Solemn Eucharist

The next Solemn Eucharist, when incense will be used, will be the 10am Choral Eucharist on Sunday 28th January, when we are celebrating Candlemas.



A Curiosity from the Cathedral in the Victorian Age:

Mike Dobson writes: I have just been researching an engraving that appears in The Illustrated London News for 1852, of the Cathedral Choir singing from the Minstrels' Gallery on Christmas Day. On the page following the engraving there is a brief article telling the readers how Christmas Day was celebrated at Exeter at the time. It seems that things then were somewhat different from today!

Christmas Supplement to The Illustrated London News

December 25th 1852

No. 600 – vol. xxi (page 570 of that year's issue)

CHRISTMAS MORNING IN EXETER CATHEDRAL

The custom of welcoming this season of holy joy with “psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs,” lingers in the cathedral city of Exeter; where, during Christmas-eve, the parish choirs perambulate the streets singing anthems, with instrumental accompaniments. The singing is protracted through the night, when the celebration often assumes a more secular character than is strictly in accordance with the festival. A more sacred commemoration is, however, at hand.

At a quarter past seven o'clock on Christmas morning the assemblage of persons in the nave of Exeter Cathedral is usually very numerous: there are the remnants of the previous vigil, with unwashed faces and sleepy eyes; but a large number are early risers, who have left their beds for better purpose than a revel. There is a great muster of the choir, and the fine Old Hundredth Psalm is sung from the gallery to a full organ, whose billows of sound roll through the vaulted edifice. The scene is strikingly picturesque: all is dim and shadowy; the red light from the flaring candles falling upon up-turned faces, and here and there falling upon a piece of grave sculpture, whilst the grey light of day begins to stream through the antique windows, adding to the solemnity of the scene. As the last verse of the Psalm peals forth, the crowd begins to move, and the spacious cathedral is soon left to the more devout few who remain to attend the morning service in the Lady-chapel.

We are very grateful to Mike for sending this. He has asked us to point out that notwithstanding his many years of service, for the avoidance of doubt, he was not in the Cathedral Choir in 1852!



Sylvia Bush RIP

We are very grateful to Geoff and his family for letting us reproduce an edited version of the Tribute that was prepared by them and read by Canon Ian Morter at Sylvia's funeral on 20th December.

Sylvia was born in Crediton and lived her younger years with her parents in Pinhoe. She won a scholarship to The Maynard School and, while good at many things, hated compulsory sports and games while the pleasures of mathematics completely escaped her. A year in the 6th Form was followed by a year working in a maternity home run by a friend of her mother's while she waited for the start of three years of nurse training at the Bristol Royal Infirmary. She turned out to be a natural nurse just like her mother.

She met Geoff in Bristol in 1962 at a nurses' party full of young men rather overflowing with the liquids beloved by rugby players. They agreed to meet again the following morning. To ensure that he greeted the right girl – simply out of vanity, Geoff had left off his glasses for the party – he took his best friend, Robin, with him simply for the purpose of identification. Once done, he thanked his friend, waved him goodbye and Sylvia and Geoff were an item for the next 61 years.

With Robin as best man, they married in Pinhoe in 1965 making their first home in Bristol where Geoff worked. Jonathan, their first child, was born in 1966 followed by Sarah in 1968.

Children brought Sylvia's nursing career to a temporary halt becoming the mainstay at home while Geoff pursued his career in the Civil Service. This took them to London in 1975 where they remained until Geoff retired from full-time working at the end of 1999. During this period, however, Sylvia was able to take up nursing again, nothing giving her more job satisfaction than becoming a theatre staff nurse at a hospital in Surrey pioneering new approaches to orthopaedic surgery.

Throughout her life and whatever else she was doing, Sylvia showed a natural ability to provide love, comfort and support to friends and, most importantly, to her family. Jonathan and Sarah and Sylvia's three grandchildren, Jos, Finn and Lily, are here today to show what an excellent job she made or, in the case of her grandchildren, helped to make of them. She was the proud and loving role model for them all.

From the early 90s, Sylvia and Geoff had a week-end home in Devon providing a sometimes much needed bolt hole from London life. When they came to live here permanently some 25 years ago, the children had grown up, left home and Sylvia began to spread her wings.

With the encouragement of the farming side of her family – two of her mother's sisters were farmers' wives - she became an active steward of the Devon County Show, a role she thoroughly enjoyed for more than 20 years. At the Show, she helped to run the cheese exhibit and competition which usually led to some very enjoyable samples to bring home!

She also enrolled at Bicton College for a three-year course in Floral Art and Design following which her main contribution as a volunteer to this beautiful Cathedral church really began.

She had been a Cathedral steward for some years but, once she had received her qualification from Bicton, she moved into the Flower Arranging team. She was chairman of the Arrangers for some ten years and only stood back recently when coping with her illness began to intrude too much.

The flowers for her you see here today are both a tribute to the skills of that remarkable team, which she simply loved being a part of, and a mark of the team's love and respect for her. Sylvia's family are very grateful to all of them, to Flick and Alison particularly who helped to carry the load as Sylvia's health increasingly hampered her.

In fact, the outpouring of love, good wishes and prayers as her illness progressed has spoken volumes about how special she was to so many people.

She listened, engaged, challenged, and supported her friends and colleagues in such a consistent way, with good humour and, when appropriate, a lovely sense of fun. So many have told us that she had that special knack of making everyone and anyone with her feel at ease. And she had the gift of always being herself no matter where she was in the world or who she was with.

Strangely, perhaps, Sylvia always regarded herself as "ordinary". To her family and, we think, well beyond, as shown by the many cards and letters received by the family since her death to add to the many received during her illness, she was, in fact, "extra-ordinary".

For two years and notwithstanding the necessary trials of radiotherapy, chemo and major surgery, she bore her illness as she had lived - with graciousness, more concerned about the rest of us than herself.

In her final weeks, she was looked after in her own bedroom by local GPs and Hospiscare nurses. The quality of care and compassion they all showed Sylvia and her family was outstanding, making the inevitable that much easier to bear. Sylvia died peacefully at home, as she had wished to, with her family by her side and holding her.

We already miss her terribly as will so many others here today and beyond who knew her and loved her. May she rest in eternal peace.

The Flower Arrangers: Remembering Sylvia

December brought with it a very sad time for ECFA, in particular. Our previous Chair and regular arranger Sylvia died following a couple of years of ill health. It all happened so quickly that we were shocked and have all found it almost impossible to come to terms with. Sylvia had insisted on arranging the pulpit as a proper farewell to Bishop Robert in September. She left the cathedral exhausted and sadly never returned. Four of us were privileged to arrange her funeral flowers and make pink rose buttonholes for all the flower ladies attending the funeral. She and I had made several coffin pieces over the years, and when we made one for Judy Best, she told me then that was just what she wanted and she wanted me to make it. For the past 18 months I have sent photos of every new set of arrangements so she still knew what we were up to. A habit that is now hard to break.

Sylvia loved arranging, learning from other arrangers and chatting to everyone she knew about the goings on. She had an amazing warmth for every person she came into contact with, and was so good at remembering what went on in their lives. She was a caring arranger and always wanted to do her best, often, towards the end, dissatisfied with her efforts, despite her work being of a very high standard. She was well qualified, having done a full time Bicton course, and was able to pass her knowledge on readily to new or younger arrangers.

She and I used to go in every Friday and used the "in between" to sort, plan, order and meet possible new arrangers. Coffee time from the van was all important! These days were always fun except when I tried to throw anything away. She would always say she would take it home and do something with it! Often not to be seen again! We spent hours together on the annual rota which you almost need an A level to do, and were often reduced to laughter or exasperation when having finished someone would chirp "but I never do pillars". The Flower Festival when she was vice-chairman took months of planning. Once all the mechanics arrived safely in the Cathedral she was looking after the Quire,

with her ladies and another group. In that group was someone who had “organised many Flower Festivals” and would only do what they wanted. It took all of Sylvia’s good humour to contain herself when they “took” 48 cream roses which were for her team. But she did blow! Fortunately, we were able to get replacements in time! Meeting the Duchess of Cornwall and showing her around the area she had responsibility for she was very gracious in sharing with her arrangers. During the interim before our current Dean arrived, the lovely Bishop Martin Shaw asked us to change the Maundy Thursday setting for the Watch to the High Altar. She really loved designing that with lilies and orchids, and we continue with that today.

Sylvia loved helping brides and was involved in dozens of weddings, dealing calmly with bridezilla or, far worse, mother of the bridezilla. We always went to great lengths to arrange just what was wanted with teams, on some occasions, cursing the need to make everything perfect. And loving the laid back brides who left us to do what we thought best, and wrote afterwards as to how perfect it all was for them.

The planning for Grand Nave dinners always was hard work but fun. I think she was involved in at least four. Sadly, over the last one she was in hospital in Leeds having very invasive surgery but insisting on a report every day on how far we were into the project. When I rang her on the final day of our work she answered from an ambulance on the motorway as they were sending her home earlier than planned; a horrid journey with no springs in the ambulance but she was so pleased to get home. When the plans for the “NEW” flower room came out, she was most upset at the size of room we were being allocated, and made it known. She was still worrying about it three weeks before she died. That has yet to be resolved.

Sylvia will be part of the Flower Room for years to come; when we try to throw anything away, when we get our silk flowers out and find someone has chopped the long stems (her wrath at this had to be seen), when we find silk flowers put away in the wrong coloured box, when we cannot get into the room for rubbish, wearing a hard hat, having silly names for people who are in the Cathedral regularly – we used to have a Rag, Tag and Bobtail, all volunteers, sadly no longer with us either.

She will always be lovingly remembered for her great pride in the Cathedral, the building, music and perfect flowers and all that enhanced the experience for anyone coming through the doors. And being a wonderful and genuinely compassionate friend to so many of us.

Flick Evans, Chair, Exeter Cathedral Flower Arrangers

What's on in January

In Conversation With... Richard Burridge

Sunday 14 January at 6:30pm, with optional drinks at 6pm before the talk begins

Richard will engage in conversation about his work as a scholar of the Gospels. Talking through his own biography, he will explore his work on understanding the Gospels as 'biography'.

Find out more at bit.ly/conversation-jan24.

Library & Archives In Focus: Calendars & Chronicles

Tuesday 23 January, drop-in between 11am and 1pm

Celebrate the new year with timeless treasures from the Cathedral Library, including the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493) and a 14th century manuscript chronicle of Exeter from the Creation to 1394.

Find out more at bit.ly/calendars-chronicles.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Friday 26 January at 10am

The Cathedral will be the opening venue in a day of events around the city to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. There will be a ceremony and talk in the Cathedral attended by Exeter's civic and faith leaders, as well as student ambassadors and primary school choirs.

Mars: War & Peace by Luke Jerram

Thursday 1 February – Wednesday 28 February

Experience artist Luke Jerram's famous installation, Mars: War and Peace in the stunning nave of Exeter Cathedral, with sound composition by BAFTA award-winning composer, Dan Jones.

Book now at bit.ly/mars-exeter.

Welcome

A warm welcome to two new Cleaners who have joined the Cathedral team- Julian Manning and Teah Greenaway.

Digging for Britain on BBC Two: January 10th at 8pm

This featured the archaeological investigations that took place last year for the building of the new Cloister Gallery. If you missed the episode first time round, do catch up with it on BBC iPlayer.