

## New Virgers in Kingston

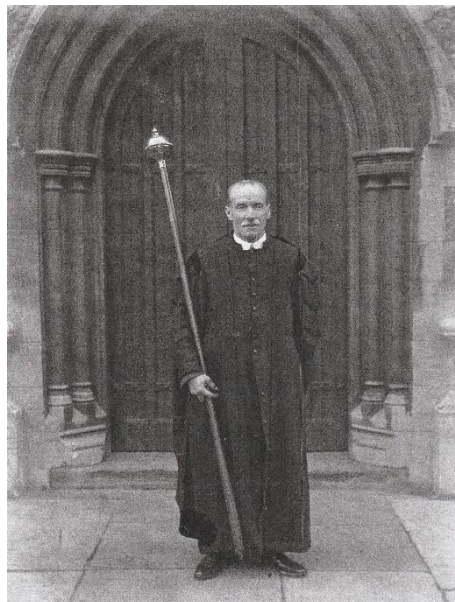


*All Saints Church, Kingston upon Thames*

The historic town-centre parish church of All Saints, Kingston upon Thames has recently reinstated the role of robed Virger after a gap of seventy-five years.

All Saints is the ancient parish church of Kingston, built on the site of a Saxon minster where the coronations of seven Saxon kings took place, including those of King Edward the Elder (900AD) and King Athelstan (925AD). Today it is the civic church of the Royal Borough and a member of the Major Churches Network.

There had not been a Verger at All Saints since the retirement of the last postholder in 1948, and now there are two, both volunteers and both members of the Guild. There are records of a Verger being part of the church establishment (presumably remunerated) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the names of the three Vergers from 1899 until 1948 are recorded. A father and son succession held the post from 1902: William Harling until his death in 1933 and then his son until his retirement through ill-health in 1948.



*William Harling – Verger 1902 - 1933*

As the church already had a long-standing team of volunteer ‘vergers’ who help to keep the church open seven days a week throughout the year, the ancient title ‘Virger’ was adopted for the new roles. The Head Virger and the Under Virger now lead the choir and clergy into and out of the main weekly services (Sunday morning at 9.30am and Choral Evensong at 6.00pm and Wednesday afternoons at 5.30pm), and also at the many Civic and Kingston Episcopal Area services that take place at All Saints. The Under-Virger carries the

historic silver-topped Beadle's Staff, which dates back to 1829, and as the photo of William Harling shows (above) was also carried by the Verger in times past.



*John Dewhurst (Head Virger) and Iain Nevill (Under-Virger)*

**John Dewhurst**

**Head Virger and Churchwarden**

**All Saints Church**

**Kingston upon Thames**