

## Head Verger at Sherborne Abbey Information Pack.



Thank you for your interest in the post of Head Verger. We hope the information pack is useful in telling you about the job but also in describing the uniqueness of Sherborne, a beautiful market town in Dorset, steeped in History, dating back to Saxon times and one of the very few which survived the dissolution of the Monasteries. People comment on the Abbey's beauty, tranquillity and prayerful atmosphere and it is held in much affection by the diocese and local community.

Like all major buildings, the pandemic has had a significant impact on worship, activity and income and we are facing the challenge ahead of rebuilding our relationships. However, we have much to look forward to, with the opening of The Abbey Tea Rooms which will hopefully happen in the Autumn the building of our new Toilets, Shop and Visitor centre, planned for the first part of the new year.

Prayer and worship are at the heart of the Abbey's life, and its ability to be open in generosity of heart to all who come through the doors is paramount. The successful candidate will have a leading role in ensuring everything is done to standards of excellence and reverence. He/She will also lead a loyal, committed, and experienced verger team and be expected to inspire confidence and professionalism under pressure. The job is full of variety, scope, and although busy will be thoroughly worthwhile, and even fun! The Abbey community values the vergers and will make the new post holder welcome. In order to work

here, a sense of humour is a must, for we laugh together often and that builds a foundation of friendship and trust which I believe is deeply important.

We will be praying for you as you discern if God is calling you to explore further by applying. With prayerful best wishes,

## Sherborne

### The Local Area



Sherborne Town is considered affluent by most measures, and the local villages generally reflect this. It mostly falls within the 25% least deprived areas within England, although the ward surrounding St. Paul's Church is within the 35% most deprived, indicating a wide socio-economic diversity within the town. It surprises some that there is the need for a local food bank, set up by members of St

Paul's, which typically provides 25 family food parcels each week. Sherborne and the surrounding villages have a relatively elderly population compared to national levels.

### Transport, Shopping & Leisure

Sherborne is on the main railway line from London Waterloo to Exeter—perhaps explaining its popularity as a retirement destination for previous city-dwellers. The A30 passes through the top of the town, and the A303 runs seven miles to the north.

Our town has a thriving high street with a good variety of shops and a large Post Office. There is currently one bank, two good sized supermarkets in the centre, and corner shops on the outskirts. Pubs, restaurants and cafés are plentiful. During the pandemic, the independent traders have been very proactive in supporting the local communities. The historic Pack Monday Fair, which dates back to the 1790s, takes place in the streets in the centre of Sherborne every October with a variety of stalls, street performers and musicians. There are also regular street markets in the town including monthly Friday Farmers Markets and Sunday Artisan Markets. There are three sports centres in the town all linked to local schools, with two including swimming pools. Further shopping and leisure facilities can be found in neighbouring Yeovil including a cinema and theatre.

**Health Services** In addition to doctors and dentist surgeries we are fortunate still to have a local hospital in Sherborne. The Yeatman Hospital, which has links with two larger hospitals in Yeovil and Dorchester, provides both in-patient and outpatient services including mental health, convalescence, end-of-life care and minor injuries. The benefice ministry team provide a chaplaincy service to the hospital (though currently curtailed due to COVID restrictions)

including regular visiting and a weekly service of Holy Communion. This is an important part of the church's ministry in supporting both patients and staff.

**Care Homes and Sheltered Housing** Within the town there are six residential care homes. Pre-COVID we held regular services of Holy Communion in each one as well as in three or four sheltered housing complexes. Within the Abbey Close is the St. Johns' Almshouse, in which a weekly service has traditionally been held.

**Schools and Open The Book** Sherborne is a town of schools—in fact within the benefice there are a total of eight. The four state schools are all part of the Sherborne Area Schools' Trust. Alongside The Gryphon School (secondary) and Sherborne Abbey Primary School, which are both church schools, is Sherborne Primary School, and we have an extremely good relationship with all three. Members of the ministry team, and indeed members of our churches, regularly take Collective Worship in the schools, provide pastoral support and serve as governors. The fourth school is a specialist learning centre for pupils facing particular educational challenges, and has recently been renamed as the Harbour Vale School.

Under the oversight of the current Abbey Education Officer (one of the Team Vicars) several teams regularly visit the primary schools with the 'Open The Book' initiative which is very well received by both staff and children. The Education Officer has also organised several other events in The Abbey including an 'Experience Easter' event and a 'Moving Up' day for our local Year 6 pupils in the summer term, as well as coordinating visits from our local schools and youth organizations such as Cubs and Brownies.

The largest independent schools are Sherborne School and Sherborne Girls School, which each have their own Anglican Chaplain. Both schools regularly hold their services and some of their music concerts in the Abbey. Within the town there is also Sherborne Preparatory School. Situated between Longburton and Lillington villages is Leweston School, a Roman Catholic co-ed independent school and nursery, for which the benefice ministry team provide an Anglican chaplaincy, including preparation for Confirmation every other year.

Most of the independent schools hold their Christmas services, Confirmation services and Commemoration services in the Abbey.

**Churches Together in Sherborne** Churches Together is an integral part of church life in our benefice, uniting us with the other Christian congregations in the town. Good relationships are enjoyed between all the churches—the non-Anglican congregations being the Catholic Church, Cheap Street United Church (Methodist and URC), the Quakers and ReBorne Community Church. This ecumenical presence is seen throughout the year in such events as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Lent Study Groups, monthly Taizé worship, a Good Friday Walk of Witness, carol singing, a Christmas Day lunch provided for those otherwise alone, and, in partnership with the local hospices, a memorial service for those who have died in the past year. Every year a Christmas card is delivered by Churches Together to every home in the town listing Christmas services.



## **So what, and who, are we looking for in our Head Verger?**

Firstly, we are looking for someone with experience in the world of being a Verger, not necessary as a Head Verger, but someone who has experience of working in this environment and who fully understands the joys and the sorrows, the opportunities and the challenges that working in such a large organisation can bring.

The successful candidate will bring to this post an excellent sense of humour, a humility of heart and an open and friendly approach to all who come into the Abbey. It is the wish of the Rector that the culture of welcome, openness and a willingness to be helpful is promoted to all who enter our doors. We want to be able to say 'yes' as often as possible. For this to happen there will be a necessity for some to experience a culture change and therefore embrace this fully.

We are looking for someone who has a high standard of professionalism and can use that to organise and efficiently manage this exciting post, whilst maintaining a sense of fun, and openness to the mistakes of others without blame.

There are many duties which of course are expected in this post, but it is important to note that the postholder will not only oversee the members of the Verging team, but also ensure that the Guardians, those who welcome in the Abbey, the Guides, the many visiting organists who practice on our fine organ and our school visits, are cared for and supported.

### **What does the Verger team look like that you will be expected to manage and oversee?**

You will be joining a team of 2 senior vergers one of whom works 30 hours, and the other 15 hours, both of whom hold a portfolio of responsibilities which are in addition to expected responsibilities in acts of worship and more general duties.

One of our Senior Vergers works 30 hours a week and maintains what was traditionally thought of as a sacristan duty, i.e., taking care of vestments, preparing them for each service, and ensuring that silverware is cleaned and ready for each service, ensuring that candles etc are ordered as and when necessary. This is in addition to responsibilities in acts of worship.

Our other Senior Verger works 15 hours a week and oversees managing the significant number of contractors who are working in the Abbey at this moment in time. With the expansion projects which are in hand, it is anticipated that this area of responsibilities will be busy for the next 18 months. This is in addition to responsibilities in acts of worship.

We have an assistant verger who works 13 hours a week and assists in the day to day running of the Abbey, as would be expected. In addition, we have a verger whose main responsibilities fall at Castleton Church working 5 hours a week in addition to being expected to assist with the occasional office. This postholder may also undertake further duties, if required, in the Abbey.

## Person Specification.

There are many attributes that are required for this post, as you will be joining the Abbey team at a time of great change. With the appointment of the new Team Rector in Autumn last year, there are several projects now in hand which require you to catch the vision of change, understand what is being achieved, and offer an open mind and have an ability to encourage and to adapt as deemed necessary.

Therefore, some of the essential qualities you will need are set out below.

- Hardworking and who can take the initiative to get things done
- Committed to building a diverse and inclusive Christian community
- Familiar with the forms of worship used within the Church of England
- Passionate about creating a welcome and open place
- Friendly and able to work as part of a team
- A good sense of humour
- A humility of heart
- An opening and welcoming approach
- An ability to cope with and embrace change.
- To be computer literate enough to cope with Office 365.
- A calm and professional approach when the pressure is on and there is much to do.

Accommodation is available for the successful applicant; this is a newly refurbished cottage in the Abbey Close. Rent Free, however, the postholder is responsible for Utility Costs.

This is based on a 40 hour week

The salary for this post is £28,500 plus 3% pension contribution.

I hope that this Application Pack has given you an insight to what we are hoping to see in our new Head Verger. However, nothing replaces the opportunity to have an informal conversation or indeed, if you are able, an informal visit before applying.

It is our hope that the new postholder will be in place by September. Please do feel free to be in touch with the Rector, The Reverend Martin Lee on [rector@sherborneabbey.com](mailto:rector@sherborneabbey.com) or his mobile 07725593100 or on our office number 01935 713777 option 4. For either an informal conversation or a visit as you see fit.

We hope that you will consider this post carefully, for the right person this will be a very exciting opportunity to join us in the next phase of the life of our beautiful Abbey.