

OBITUARY
THE VERY REV. ALFRED GILBERT GODDARD THURLOW,
M.A., F.S.A, F.R.Hist.S.
1911-1991
President 1967-1970

Gilbert Thurlow, son of a clergyman, was born on April 6, 1911, and brought up in a country parsonage. Having graduated B.A. in 1932 at Selwyn College, Cambridge, he went on to complete his training for the ministry at Cuddesdon Theological College. He was ordained deacon in 1934 and priest a year later. After spending some years as curate at Wokingham he came to Norwich in February 1939 and was Cathedral Precentor until 1955, combining this office with the curacy of St. Mary-in-the-Marsh — the parish of the Cathedral precincts — and at various times the incumbency of several other churches (St. Clement, St. George Colegate, St. Michael-at-Plea, and St. Andrew with St. Peter Hungate). It was at St. George's, long neglected and war damaged, that his task of restoration and rebuilding began; but his greatest challenge came in 1955 when he became vicar of St. Nicholas at Great Yarmouth and faced the final resuscitation of that church which had been badly damaged in 1942. This was eventually achieved enabling a Service of Consecration to be held in 1961. Gilbert always maintained it was the grandest part of his ministry. In 1964 he returned to Norwich Cathedral as a Residentiary Canon, becoming Vice-Dean five years later.

His next move took him to Gloucester to be installed as Dean in January 1973, an office he held for some ten years before retiring as Dean Emeritus to live in one of those delightful houses in East Pallant, Chichester. His leaving Norwich meant that we lost the services of a long-standing member of our Society which he had joined in his early days in the city. He had been on our Council since 1949 and had been elected a Vice-President in 1966 before beginning a three-year term as President the following year. Although unable to attend meetings after going away he remained a Vice-President until his death on April 24, 1991, and continued to take a keen interest in our affairs. Departure for Gloucester had also involved his giving up his seven-year chairmanship of The Committee of the Bishop of Norwich for Books and Documents.

Gilbert had a good knowledge of ancient buildings and their contents. It induced him to write guidebooks and studies of the ecclesiastical art of many of the buildings in which he served. Campanology was a favourite hobby and he took every opportunity to encourage more bell-ringing. He had been a member of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers since 1945 and was their President from 1965-69. Having himself rung over 100 peals it is not surprising that he has been described as the most celebrated change-ringing cleric of his time, and he will be remembered for his book *Church Bells and Ringers of Norwich*. He was a brilliant after-dinner speaker and had great good humour, charm and wisdom combined with a remarkable memory. But it was his unflagging energy and enthusiasm that was instrumental in animating others and getting things done. Wherever he lived he made a considerable impact on the life of the locality.

At a Requiem in Chichester Cathedral and a Memorial Choral Evensong (1662) in Gloucester Cathedral there was music which Gilbert had always loved, and in tributes paid to his ministry it was said of him 'His Faith was his Life'.

I.C.