

Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) John Peter Morrison

Peter Sherrad

Licensed Lay Reader Lt. Col. (Rtd) John Morrison is a much respected and well-loved man who serves in the Ministry team at St Mary-in-Castro and who has had a most interesting life worthy of a stand-alone article. Since it ceased to be a Garrison Church in 2014, this extra-parochial church within the Diocese of Canterbury has been served by a Ministry team comprising four ordained priests, a Licensed Lay Reader and a Lay Chaplain.

He was born in Hastings, East Sussex in 1950. His father worked in the town, and, with his older sister and mother, the family lived in Battle until 1959. They then moved to Bletchley, Buckinghamshire. The family observing a Baptist faith throughout John's childhood. A keen member of the Boy's Brigade he had an interesting but happy childhood, attending Bletchley Grammar School. He joined the Army Intelligence Corps in October 1967 and during basic training was selected to go on to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. It was here John was baptised and confirmed into the Church of England. Commissioned back into the Intelligence Corps in 1970, initial training required an eighteen-month period with the King's Own Scottish Borderers, as a platoon commander, which included two very exciting tours in Northern Ireland.

John was duty officer one evening in Templer Barracks, Ashford when one of his senior officers summoned him to Wye to make up numbers at a formal dinner. Apparently, a post-graduate student from Rhodesia had bought a minivan from the family and, when cleaning it out, she had discovered a long-lost ladies inscribed gold watch, a precious first anniversary present. She had instantly been invited to dinner, and the party needed to be balanced, hence

John being summoned. The two took an instant dislike to each other, he with his tales of 'derring-do' in Northern Ireland and she with the importance of her botanical experiments for her doctorate. When the lady left, John felt it politic to make his excuses at a decent time after. To his surprise the lady was still sat in her 'new' minivan with a distinct smell of petrol in the air. He helpfully explained that the van's carburettor was flooded, forgetting that the lady, Liz, had driven many tractors on the family farm. It was a prickly relationship, which lasted into marriage in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe) in August 1974, and which persists today some 49 years later.

After a tour in Cold War Berlin, John and Liz were posted to Hong Kong. Almost as soon as they arrived, their son Douglas was born in September 1977 in the British Military Hospital. The doctor in command wanted to court-martial the doctor who had allowed Liz to fly so late into her pregnancy but, unfortunately for him, the doctor who made that decision was the village GP in Wye and therefore not subject to military law. He had judged that Liz was safer with John in Hong Kong than crying on his shoulder in his surgery. As the military hospital was north of Boundary Street in Kowloon, it has been a family joke that Douglas still has his national service to fulfil in the People's Liberation Army of China. After a further period in Northern Ireland, initially in Derry/Londonderry and then Lisburn, John was appointed to the training team in Ashford. During this time in England, son James was born in March 1981. John was particularly lucky with postings heading to Washington DC, the Falkland Islands (after the war), Germany and Cyprus, always with the family until

the two boys went to the King's School in Canterbury as boarders.

After a successful period as a student at the Joint Service Defence College at the Royal Naval College Greenwich, John was selected to an operational and training regimental command in Leicestershire as a Lt Col. Following this, Liz was appointed to a science teaching post at the King's school, and they settled down in Canterbury. Time in Whitehall was followed, in Bedfordshire, helping to move the Intelligence Corps and other Defence intelligence elements from Ashford and elsewhere to Chicksands in Bedfordshire. Operational appointments then followed, with NATO in Bosnia Herzegovina and with the UN in Abkhazia, Georgia,

He was appointed Military Secretary for the Permanent Joint Headquarters, Northwood during the 1st Iraq War in 2003. Being separated from his family was not to his liking, so at the end of the year he left the Regular Army to become a civil servant in the Ministry of Defence. Employed to support the move of Royal Engineer elements from Rochester to Bicester, Oxfordshire, John was then posted to Shorncliffe, as the discipline officer for the Southeast of England. Finally, he was posted to Regent's Barracks, Whitehall to support Specialist Military Units and the Defence and Security Media Advisory Committee. This took John to places as diverse as the Security Service headquarters and the Daily Telegraph newsroom.

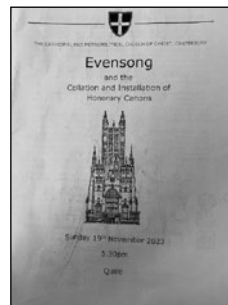
John retired in 2017 after exactly 50 years of public service. Throughout his career, he had been an active church member and a member of the Army Archdeaconry and the Forces Synodical Council. It was a natural progression from such engagement to put himself forward for selection as a Lay

Minister or Reader. After the appropriate theological training and placement, John was licensed in Canterbury Cathedral in 2011. After contributing to the Church of England at all levels, as a National Church Peer Reviewer of other Dioceses, a C a n t e r b u r y

Province lay panel member for the Clergy Disciplinary process, a member of the Archbishop's Council, an elected member of Diocesan Synod, Deanery Treasurer and a Parish Safeguarding Officer, John has been selected to join the College of Canons of Canterbury Cathedral and this was carried out during a service of Evensong on 19 November 2023. This was a much-deserved recognition of all that John represents. Currently, as a member of the Ministry team, he is leading and/or preaching at St Mary in Castro, Dover Castle (his former Garrison Church) every month. Otherwise, he is a member of St Peter's Church in Canterbury city centre.



Lieutenant Colonel (Rtd) Canon John Morrison celebrates his selection into the college of Canons of Canterbury Cathedral



Cathedral programme for Evensong and collation of Canons

For all that he has experienced and achieved in life John is an incredibly humble individual. Unfailingly polite he is clearly comfortable as a Licensed Lay Reader. St Mary-in-Castro is extremely fortunate to have his talents. He does

not need to self-promote and his commanding vocal talents ensure the services he leads and the sermons he preaches are all clearly heard by those who attend St Mary-in-Castro. In his role in the church John serves Dover well and, with others, has ensured that the church continues to be an open and active church in the Diocese of Canterbury. John has contributed greatly to the continuing ministry of St Mary-in-Castro in its unique and privileged position in Dover. Long may

he continue to do so. His recent appointment as a Canon of Canterbury Cathedral is a wider recognition of his dedicated service and ministry



*John Morrison in Lay
Reader robes for Cathedral
service*

Environment Committee Janet Dagys, Chair

The Environment Committee continues to meet at the Dover smART premises next to the Yacht Club on the second Monday of January, March, May, July, September & November. Members also communicate and share information through a WhatsApp Group. We continue to focus on the appearance of the town, cleanliness, litter, rights of way and tourism, taking action when and where we can be effective and can make a positive difference. The Dover Society includes many rural areas around the town, and we would welcome new members from these areas to have their voice heard on these topics.

Ongoing areas of interest have been the Dover Beacon Project on Bench Street, the Discovery Centre & the Roundhouse Theatre, the Painted House, the state of buildings in the town centre, the availability and condition of toilet facilities in the town and on the seafront, litter and the conservation of listed buildings and trees.

We have been following-up, with Crown Estates, its responsibility for the six badly rusted light poles on the seafront close to the Eastern Docks, two of which are missing a light. Progress in actioning the repairs is going very slowly! Crown Estates has initiated a project in its Capital Renewal programme, and

it is supposed to go into design in 2024.

We encourage Dover Society members and members of the public to post photos of excessive litter they see to the Dover District Council (DDC) website at forms.dover.gov.uk/xfp/form/1184

We also encourage Dover Society members and members of the public to post photos of buildings in a poor state of maintenance in the town centre on the DDC website at dover.gov.uk/Report/Report.aspx

The website passion4dover.co.uk displays many of the projects that the Environment Committee is working on and is maintained by a member of the team. If you are passionate about Dover and one of the projects on this website, please join the Environment Committee and work with other team members to move things forward.

We continue to liaise with our colleague and Dover Town Council 'Walkers are Welcome' promoter Pam Brivio on walks in the town, Jayne Miles (Town Centres Manager, Dover District Council), Chris Townend (Growth & Development, Dover District Council) local Kent Police and other local town, district and KCC councillors.