

Westminster Abbey



A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE THE
150TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL
BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION

150 years in 2010
R·A·B·I 
Supporting Farming Families

Wednesday 24 February 2010
Noon

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution — 1860 to 2010

Times change...needs don't

In the mid-nineteenth century farmers were facing a time of uncertainty following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. It was then that John Joseph Mechi, who had prospered as a businessman in the City of London and turned his interest to farming and improving agricultural production, became concerned that there was no organisation to help 'destitute' farmers. So he set about soliciting support for a charity to help farmers in distress and by the end of 1859 he had the backing of '700 Noblemen, Gentlemen, Farmers, Implement Makers, and others'.

On 7 February 1860 six founder members held an inaugural meeting and four months later the Agricultural Benevolent Institution was officially established. In 1863, with the patronage of Queen Victoria, it became the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.

The objective of the institution was 'to secure a home for, or pension to, the bona fide farmer, or widow of a farmer, and to maintain and educate the orphan children of farmers.' Qualification for assistance was through election by the Institution's donors and subscribers, held annually before the annual general meetings in June. For many years the number of suitable candidates, each recommended by two persons of standing in the community, considerably exceeded the number of pensions available. The successful ones received annual pensions of £26 for single men, £20 for single women and £40 for married couples, amounts which remained unchanged for 100 years.

By 1935, in the midst of the Depression, when RABI was celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary there were over 400 candidates for 150 new pensions and the Institution was maintaining over 1,000 pensioners at an annual cost of £32,000. In its first seventy-five years the charity paid out nearly £1.25 million to almost 7,000 beneficiaries. Over the next ten years the rapidly changing industrial and social structure of Britain, together with the advances in agriculture and the introduction of the welfare state, brought changes to the way RABI operated. Increased reserves made it possible to provide support for all those who qualified for help without the lottery of having to depend on votes at the AGM.

Following the 100th anniversary in 1960, grants to beneficiaries were increased and, as a consequence of the 1967 foot and mouth outbreak, provision was made to help working farming families.

The past two decades have seen even more far-reaching changes with RABI's remit extended to include farmworkers and their families in 1998; the establishment of regional welfare officers covering England and Wales; the introduction of an emergency helpline, which handled a total of 25,969 calls during the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic when RABI paid out almost £9million in nine months to help more than 8,000 farming families; and the development of the Gateway Project—a scheme to help farmers supplement their income from outside sources.

In normal circumstances, the majority of RABI's support still goes to helping long-term beneficiaries. In 2009, RABI paid out close to £2million to over 1,500 members of the farming community; while regional welfare officers recovered over £350,000 in state benefits on behalf of beneficiaries.

It is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of pioneering Victorian farmer John Joseph Mechi that we are here today, to give thanks for his foresight and his legacy to the farming industry.

Most of the church, with the exception of the North Transept, is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

Please ensure that mobile phones, cellular phones, and pagers are switched OFF.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Westminster Abbey Special Service Choir, conducted by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist.

The organ is played by James McVinnie, Assistant Organist.

Music before the service:

Samuel Rathbone, Organ Scholar, plays:

Prelude and Fugue in C BWV 547 *Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)*

Sonata III *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-47)*

Prelude and Fugue in G *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*

A procession of the Chairmen of the Voluntary County Committees together with representatives of the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs and of The Worshipful Company of Farmers moves to places in the North and South Transepts. All remain seated.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster Locum Tenens is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and conducted to her place in Quire. All stand, then sit.

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester is received. All stand.

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ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing. The Choir sings

THE INTROIT

GIVE almes of thy goods and turn never thy face from any poor man:
and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee.

Christopher Tye (c1505–c72)

Offertory sentence Book of Common Prayer;
after Tobit 4

All sing

THE HYMN

*during which the Collegiate Procession,
together with His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, moves to
places in the Quire and Sacrarium*

ALL my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust
but God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth th' Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Michael 333 NEH
Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, says

THE BIDDING

ON behalf of the Dean and Chapter I welcome you warmly to Westminster Abbey. Here in Parliament Square, at the centre of our national life, alongside the Houses of Parliament, the Supreme Court, and Her Majesty's Treasury, the Abbey stands for the eternal values under God of respect for the Creation and loving service of our fellow men and women.

We shall give thanks for the hundred and fifty years of service and love that have been provided by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution. As we hear the testimonies of those involved in the work of RABI, we shall look to the future by dedicating a standard that will be held aloft as a sign of the need and of the work.

We shall pray for all farmers and those engaged with them in agriculture, in the distribution of their produce, and in the care of the environment, and we shall pray for God's blessing in our lives, our nation, and our world. As we come into the presence of God, let us now pray for a moment in silence.

We unite our prayers as we say together:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All sit. James Chapman, Vice Chairman, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, reads from the Nave Pulpit from

PSALM 104

PRAISE the Lord, O my soul: O Lord my God, thou art become exceeding glorious; thou art clothed with majesty and honour.

He laid the foundations of the earth: that it never should move at any time.

He sendeth the springs into the rivers: which run among the hills.

All beasts of the field drink thereof: and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation: and sing among the branches.

He watereth the hills from above: the earth is filled with the fruit of thy works.

He bringeth forth grass for the cattle: and green herb for the service of men; that he may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man: and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

The trees of the Lord also are full of sap: even the cedars of Libanus which he hath planted;

wherein the birds make their nests: and the fir-trees are a dwelling for the stork.

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats: and so are the stony rocks for the conies.

He appointed the moon for certain seasons: and the sun knoweth his going down.

Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour: until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.

All remain seated. The Choir sings

THE ANTHEM

THOU visitest the earth and blessest it: thou crownest the year with thy goodness.

Maurice Greene (1696-1755)

Psalm 65: 9, 12

2 CORINTHIANS 9: 6-15

THE point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.’ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

JUDGE eternal, throned in splendour,
Lord of lords and King of kings,
with thy living fire of judgement
purge this realm of bitter things:
solace all its wide dominion
with the healing of thy wings.

Still the weary folk are pining
for the hour that brings release:
and the city’s crowded clangour
cries aloud for sin to cease;
and the homesteads and the woodlands
plead in silence for their peace.

Crown, O God, thine own endeavour;
cleave our darkness with thy sword;
feed the faithless and the hungry
with the richness of thy word:
cleanse the body of this nation
through the glory of the Lord.

Rhuddlan 490 NEH
from Edward Jones' Musical Relicks of Welsh Bards 1800

Henry Scott Holland
(1847-1918)

THE ADDRESS

from the Nave Pulpit

by

The Right Reverend John Oliver
Honorary Chaplain and Trustee,
The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution

All remain seated. The Choir sings

THE ANTHEM

FOR the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our joyful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our joyful hymn of praise.

John Rutter (b 1945)

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our joyful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our joyful hymn of praise.

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917)

All remain seated for

THE TESTIMONIES

by

Mary Kenward *from the Lantern*
and
John Wyatt *from the Nave Pulpit*

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

during which the Royal Charter is borne through the church to the High Altar and the RABI Standard is borne to the Lantern to be dedicated

FOR the fruits of his creation,
thanks be to God;
for his gifts to every nation,
thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while men are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
in our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests men are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of his Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good all men inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

Ar hyd y nos 245 NEH
Welsh traditional melody

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

The Royal Charter is borne by

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill DL
RABI President

and escorted by

Rosemary Nash *and* Mel Jones
RABI Vice President *RABI Regional Welfare Officer,*
North Wales and Shropshire

The RABI Standard is borne by

Clarissa Hallings-Pott
Chairman, RABI East Sussex

and escorted by

Sally Field *and* David Burden
RABI Regional Officer, South East *Chairman, RABI West Sussex*

All remain standing for

THE DEDICATION OF THE STANDARD

The Dean says:

O GOD, Maker of all things, Redeemer of all mankind, Comforter of your people, who fill all things living with plenteousness, who bring good news to the poor, who give diverse gifts to your children: we dedicate this Standard as a sign of the work and service of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, and we pray that all who rally under it may follow the great example of those who have gone before them in this Institution, to the relief of need and want, to the benefit of all your children, and to the honour and glory of your holy name, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

All kneel or sit for

THE PRAYERS

The Reverend Ralph Godsall, Priest Vicar, Westminster Abbey:

WE give thanks for the goodness of God in creation; for the fruitfulness of the land, for the changing seasons, and the crops and livestock which provide our food; for the skill and dedication of all who farm the land.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

The Reverend Dr Stuart Burgess CBE, Rural Advocate and Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities:

WE give thanks for John Joseph Mechi, the founder of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution; for all benefactors, past and present; for those who give generously today; for the County Committees, staff members, and volunteers; for Officers and Trustees.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

Lise Venthen, Head of Fundraising, Marketing and Communications, RABI:

WE pray for all who need and receive our help; for our beneficiaries; for those who look back proudly on a lifetime of farming work, and those who have suffered special hardship; for the residents in our homes in Somerset and in Suffolk and for those who care for them.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

David Chantler, Chairman, RABI Kent County Committee:

WE pray for working farmers who are faced with accident, illness, or misfortune; with the uncertainties of bad weather and the problems of animal health; for those who are seeking new ways in which to use their farming skills.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

Andrew Densham CBE, Chairman, RABI:

WE pray for all who work on the land, and in related industries; in food processing and distribution, in agricultural and biological science, in engineering and research.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

Helen Roberts, Chairman, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs:

WE pray for the future of farming and for RABI and other agricultural support agencies as they respond to changing needs; for politicians and economists, for those who make national and international policy to ensure that there is food for all, and that the land is maintained in good heart for future generations.

Lord hear us:

Lord graciously hear us.

All say:

ALMIGHTY God,
you have provided the resources of the world
to sustain the life of all your children,
and have so ordered our life that we depend on one another;
bless us in our daily work,
and as you have given us the knowledge to produce plenty,
give us also the wisdom to bring it within the reach of all,
and the generosity to give our help to those in special need;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

NOW thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms
hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the One eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Nun danket 413 NEH
from Johann Crüger's Praxis Pietatis Melica c1647

German, Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)
translated by
Catherine Winkworth (1827-78)

All remain standing. The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

GO forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no-one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

All remain standing to sing

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our gracious Queen.
Long live our noble Queen.
God save The Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen.

Music after the service:

Final from Symphonie I

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

All remain standing as the Collegiate Procession, together with His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, moves to the west end of the church. Presentations are made.

Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in their places until directed to move by the Stewards.

*A retiring collection will be taken in support of the work of
The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.*

The bells of the Abbey Church are rung.

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution wishes to thank
Newton Investment Management Ltd and Waitrose for their support on
this occasion.

NEWTON
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Waitrose

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