

REVEREND CANON DOCTOR WILLIAM ALFRED LESLIE VINCENT

Leslie was born on 22 December 1911 in Newport, Monmouthshire, the second but only surviving son of William and Jessie Vincent. His first years were spent in his mother's family home which, because they were hauliers had stables and horses. His father was a builder and decorator.

He learnt to play the piano and organ, and sang in the choir at St. Woolos' Cathedral. He attended Newport High School where he was a nippy rucker half-back, and went on to read History at Bristol University where music also played an important part in his life.

His first teaching job was in Chelmsford and he was ordained priest in Chelmsford Cathedral on Trinity Sunday 1940.

He went on to be a member of staff at St. Edward's School in Oxford, and as a member of St. Edmund Hall began his B.Litt thesis on the grammar schools. This was published in 1950 as *The State and School Education 1640-1660* and was acclaimed in the *New Statesman* by Hugh Trevor-Roper as a perfect model for such a study.

In 1944 he married the 21- year- old Mary Price, daughter of a churchwarden at St Woolos, Newport and shortly after became chaplain of Christ Church, Oxford, in which capacity it was necessary to sing well, and headmaster of Christ Church Cathedral Choir School.

After six years at Christ Church Leslie spent twelve years in Chester as chaplain and lecturer in divinity at Chester Training College and embarked upon further research on the early grammar schools.

In 1964 he moved on to be Vice-Principal of the College of St. Matthias, Fishponds, Bristol and finished his doctoral thesis which was published as *The Grammar Schools, 1660-1714*. He received his Oxford doctorate in 1968. Before leaving Bristol he was made honorary canon of Bristol Cathedral.

He and Mary retired to Tarrant Keyneston where he took Sunday services in the churches of the Tarrant valley; the ancient church at Tarrant Crawford is of special significance to him. He and Mary worked hard with a group of friends to found the Wimborne branch of NADFAS. Meanwhile he was interested in alternative medicine and the benefits of acupuncture, and grappled with self-questioning about his own religious faith.

Nineteen years ago he and Mary moved to Wimborne where she died in the Victoria Hospital after only three months in their new home.

At eighty Leslie learnt to be self-sufficient. He was always keen on walking, and the steep staircase in his house, plus walking around Wimborne by the river helped to maintain his fitness.

He has now lived at Stoneleigh for three years, still gaining exercise from the stairs up to his room. The high point of his week is going to the communion service at the Minster and religious self-questioning is resolved in a return to the simple religious faith with which he grew up.

Felicity Vincent Black December 2011