

OBITUARIES

# THE RIGHT REV KENNETH RICHES

**The Right Rev Kenneth Riches, Bishop of Lincoln, 1956-74, died on May 15 aged 90. He was born on September 20, 1908.**

**K**enneth Riches was a genial Bishop of Lincoln whose skill and confidence rubbed off on his diocese. Knowledgeable about eastern England, especially its villages and great houses, he was fortunate in the colleagues he inherited and his many friends among postwar ordinands, especially from Cuddesdon and Oxbridge. He took the opportunity to staff his diocese with able and energetic clergy, who like himself visited and knew their parishioners. His experiment of linking 14 parishes together in the South Ormsby Group was the key to his planning and was copied in Norwich and other dioceses.

He was wise enough not to be a centraliser, and he saw that the strength of communities of faith today lies in local initiatives in all their varieties. He was a keen ecumenist, looked forward to the ordination of women, and was a follower in many respects of Bishop Edward King, the greatest of the Bishops of Lincoln in the past 200

years. He avoided episcopal self-concern and public references to "the bishop's diary". He could laugh at himself when boys giggled at the line in the hymn, "Riches I seek not, nor man's empty praise". When he double-booked visiting speakers from a distance, his charming apologies could suggest that this was typical of a Church which does not believe in management, and the sophisticated among the audience would murmur cheerfully, "The unsearchable riches".

Kenneth Riches was born in Suffolk, attended Colchester Royal Grammar School and took a first in theology at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he was influenced by the teaching of Sir Edwyn Hoskins. After Cuddesdon he went to parishes in Portsea and Dulwich before returning to Cambridge as chaplain of Sidney Sussex.

With Charles Smyth he edited *The Cambridge Review*, which in those days was a High Anglican conservative journal, and with Kenneth Carey and Launcelot Fleming, both of whom also became bishops, he formed an able trio who guided those wondering about ordination during and after the war.

In 1942 he married and left Cambridge to become rector of Bredfield in Suffolk, but after two years he was appointed vicar of Cuddesdon and Principal of the theological college, which, however, was then still a hostel for munition workers from Cowley. So he set to work as vicar of the parish and prepared for students — who were very different, on their return in the closing months of 1945, from the prewar ordinands.

Kenneth and Katharine, his wife, were warm, friendly and understanding, which was essential, for the ordinands found the semi-monastic discipline abnormal for families and children. In practice, Riches relaxed the rules, and the students learnt much from seeing an enthusiastic country vicar who had a knack of making himself welcome as a visitor and friend. They felt that traditional Catholic Anglicanism was on the move and that Riches was enabling change.

After six years at Cuddesdon he was appointed Bishop of Dorchester and a canon of Christ Church, Oxford. His many interests flourished. He was twice a visiting lecturer at the General Theological Seminary in New York, and he



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gave time to other ecumenical Anglican interests. He joined a committee of the World Council of Churches for the Ministry, and even in retirement was an assistant bishop of Louisiana. He always found it difficult to say no, and his enthusiasm never waned.

In 1956 he began his life's work at Lincoln, where he stayed for 18 years. He felt himself to be a

successor of the saintly Bishop Edward King, who had also been Principal of Cuddesdon, and he delighted in finding memories of his predecessor's teaching, such as the aged farmer who had enquired as a lad how he should prepare for Holy Communion and was told to clean his boots the night before.

Edward King House, as it has become, was a centre for retreats and meditation, and Riches gave it his constant support. At the cathedral the scholarly Dr Colin Dunlop was developing the liturgy and embellishing the building, commissioning Duncan Grant's remarkable Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Riches's work in the diocese was reinforced at the Theological College by Dr Oliver Tomkins, who continued the lively tradition of Catholic worship and radical theology with staff and students who went on to give outstanding service to the Church. Riches was able to attract some of the ablest Anglican clergy from England and abroad. He encouraged the growth of ecumenism, especially relations with Methodists, and in the 1960s he invited a learned Methodist scholar, a woman social worker and later a succession of Roman Catho-

lic scholars to join the college.

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His personal spiritual discipline gave him a faith which enabled him to encourage those who sometimes found the Church unrewarding. His many friends in London and the universities looked to him for insight and refreshment. Like his hero Edward King, he urged freedom from any "religious harshness". He was repelled by the inhuman arguments and attitudes over reunion with Methodists or a welcome to women. He understood Anglo-Catholic objections — perhaps he had once half shared them — but he came to a more tolerant form of faith.

He was one of the most influen-

tial of the senior bishops on the bench at the end of his time at Lincoln, and there were some regrets that he had not led more radical reforms. When he installed canons at the cathedral he still insisted on the old medieval oath that they should be personally responsible for closing the gates of Minster Yard every night, though the gates had been gone for 150 years. Perhaps he should have anticipated the need for a non-stipendiary ministry in the villages. However he always encouraged individual parishes and institutions within his diocese to make their own changes. He and Katharine (who served as a JP) were always hospitable and warmly generous, and the gate to the Bishop's House was open.

In retirement at Dunwich, he rejoiced in his family, his garden, his walks on the Suffolk coast with his dog, and his visits to Cuddesdon for his retreat. He gave unostentatious support to village churches in the countryside around. Those he had married or ordained or worked with found him always available.

He is survived by his wife and by their daughter and two sons.

# BISHOPRIC FOR CANON RUNCIE OF CUDDESDON

Canon Robert Alexander Kennedy Runcie, Principal of Cuddesdon College, one of the most famous training centres for priests in the Anglican Communion, has been appointed Bishop of St. Albans. He is 48.

He succeeds Dr. E. M. Gresford Jones who is retiring after 19 years as Bishop.

Canon Runcie, who came to Cuddesdon from Cambridge in 1960, as Principal of the college and Vicar of the little Oxfordshire parish, expects to take up his new duties early next year — in February or March.

He is the fifth successive Principal to become a Bishop.

The son of a Scots engineer, he is a native of Liverpool, and was educated at Merchant Taylors School, Liverpool. He came up to Brasenose to read Greats, but his university career was interrupted by the war, and it was as an officer of the Scots Guards that he served in Italy, where he won the Military Cross.

After returning to Oxford to take a First, he went to Westcott House, Cambridge, to train for the Ministry, and then went off to be a curate in the diocese of Newcastle.

## Returned

He soon returned to Westcott House where Kenneth Carey was Principal and Hugh Montefiore was a colleague, but after two years as Vice-Principal he became, in 1956, a Fellow and Dean of Trinity Hall where he taught classics and theology. Four years later he succeeded the Rev. Edward Knapp-Fisher, now Bishop of Pretoria, at Cuddesdon.

In his years there he has achieved great things, bringing village and college together in a way that was undreamed of only a few years ago, and under his regime Cuddesdon has become a far more liberal place.

No previous Principal has taken so prominent a part in village affairs; he is chairman of the Parish Council, chairman of the managers of the little school and president of the angling association.

He also plays cricket for Cuddesdon and is a staunch Oxford United fan.

## Also well-known

He married the daughter of a distinguished Cambridge law



Canon ROBERT RUNCIE

don, and they have a ten-year-old son who is at the Dragon School, and a daughter, three years younger, at the Oxford High School.

Mrs. Runcie is also well-known in local affairs. An accomplished pianist, she has for some time taught music both at Horspath and Cuddesdon schools.

Canon Runcie has no doubts that his new job will be a tough assignment. It is in an area of rapid growth, and there is also a large immigrant population, especially in the Bedford area.

"But I don't see any ground for either complacency or despondency."

## SHELTER WEEK IN N. OXON

Next week is Shelter Week in North Oxfordshire.

Shelter, the campaign for Britain's homeless families, will be raising money by house-to-house collections, a buffet supper on Saturday, October 25, and a fashion show at Gosford Hill School on October 29.

Just a few months later we were mourning the passing of Lord Runcie of Cuddesdon at the age of 78. He was held in the highest regard by all who knew him and who remembered his time as incumbent and College Principal with fond affection. I suspect that the memories would have been just as fond even had he not gone on to achieve such high office, for he had a remarkable ability to 'connect' with people - all sorts and conditions - immediately and at a profound level. He will be remembered here in Cuddesdon as a man of God who always had time for the individual person. A fine documentary TV programme was made by his son James, who came to the village to film in the Autumn.

Lord Runcie tribute