

Did You Know? An Anglican Glossary

The Beadle

The Beadel (Saxon böeden: to [proclaim]) is not an ecclesiastical officer. He is the crier and messenger of a court, appointed by the parish vestry and accountable to them.

He is expected to keep order in church. He had other parish duties including oversight of the parish workhouse and orphanage (*Oliver Twist*). In London and some large towns it was customary to swear in the beadle as a constable.

There are secular beadles in universities, guildhalls and the title is used for some security guards in shopping malls.

Traditionally the beadle wore "a gold-laced coat" and a cocked hat, depending upon "the taste" of the vestry. He carries a staff (mace) of office.

Note: The royal mace carried into Parliament represents the queen and there can be no proceedings without it.



Literature's most famous beadle: Mr. Bumble from Dicken's *Oliver Twist*. Artist: Charles Edmund Brook.