

# Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Dr. James Alfred Wight (James Herriot) Friday, October 20, 1995

A service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of Dr. J. Alfred Wight was held at York Minster, England on Friday, October 20. Dr. Wight achieved global fame under the name of James Herriot for his best selling novels on veterinary practice, the best known being - "All Creatures Great and Small" which also became a television series. Dr. Wight was an Honorary Life Member of the AABP.

The service was conducted by the Dean of York, the Very Rev. Raymond Furnell, assisted by the Precenter and the Rev. Toddy Hoare. More than 1,500 voices shook the rafters of York Minister with a rousing rendering of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*. A brass group from St. Peter's School, York played fanfares composed by Mr. Andrew Wright, Director of Music at the School, under the direction of Mr. Christopher Blood.

**Dr. Colin J. Whitaker, President, British Cattle Veterinary Association also represented the AABP at the service. He sent the AABP Editor the following report:**

"On Friday 20th, October 1995 I took a train from my home town of Ashford in Kent to Charing Cross in London, then boarded the Flying Scotsman at Kings Cross which took me speedily to the beautiful city of York.

I made this journey to represent the AABP at the Service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of James Alfred Wight, veterinary surgeon and author James Herriot. The celebration of this remarkable man's life took place in the magnificent York Minster. It was a lovely day and the sun shone through the beautiful stained glass windows on to the congregation of over 1,500 people.

The service opened with the hymn "Praise my soul, the King of Heaven," then Alfred Wight's lovely granddaughter, Emma Page read the lesson from *Philippians 4: 4-9*. We were then treated to some wonderful singing of Psalm 8 by the York Minster choir. This was followed by a reading of a very funny extract from *Vet in Harness* by Christopher Timothy, the actor who plays Herriot. This was a lovely way to demonstrate the humour of this man. The congregation then sang "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small". Robert Hardy, the actor who plays Siegfried Farnon, read an amusing extract from the *World of Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse, a favourite author of Alfred Wight.

There was more great singing from the choir and some resounding fanfares by a local school's brass band group. An old friend of Alfred Wight, Alex Taylor, gave an appreciation of the man and demonstrated that fame and fortune had not changed his devotion to the animals he served and to his family.

**Alfred Wight's son, James, then gave a very moving and amusing address about his father to whom he was so obviously devoted and who he so greatly respected. A lovely sense of humour is definitely hereditary!**

After the service, there was a reception for 170 invited guests in the Merchant Taylors Hall where I was introduced to Alfred Wight's very first farmer client - he is 92, a Mr. Bosomthwaite, a lovely old Yorkshire name. His son was there and still farms the same farm. I met James Wight and passed on the good wishes of the AABP.

**There was no mourning on this day but a joyous celebration of the life of a great man and I was very proud and honoured to be a part of it."**



*"The sun never sets on the Bovine Practitioner"*